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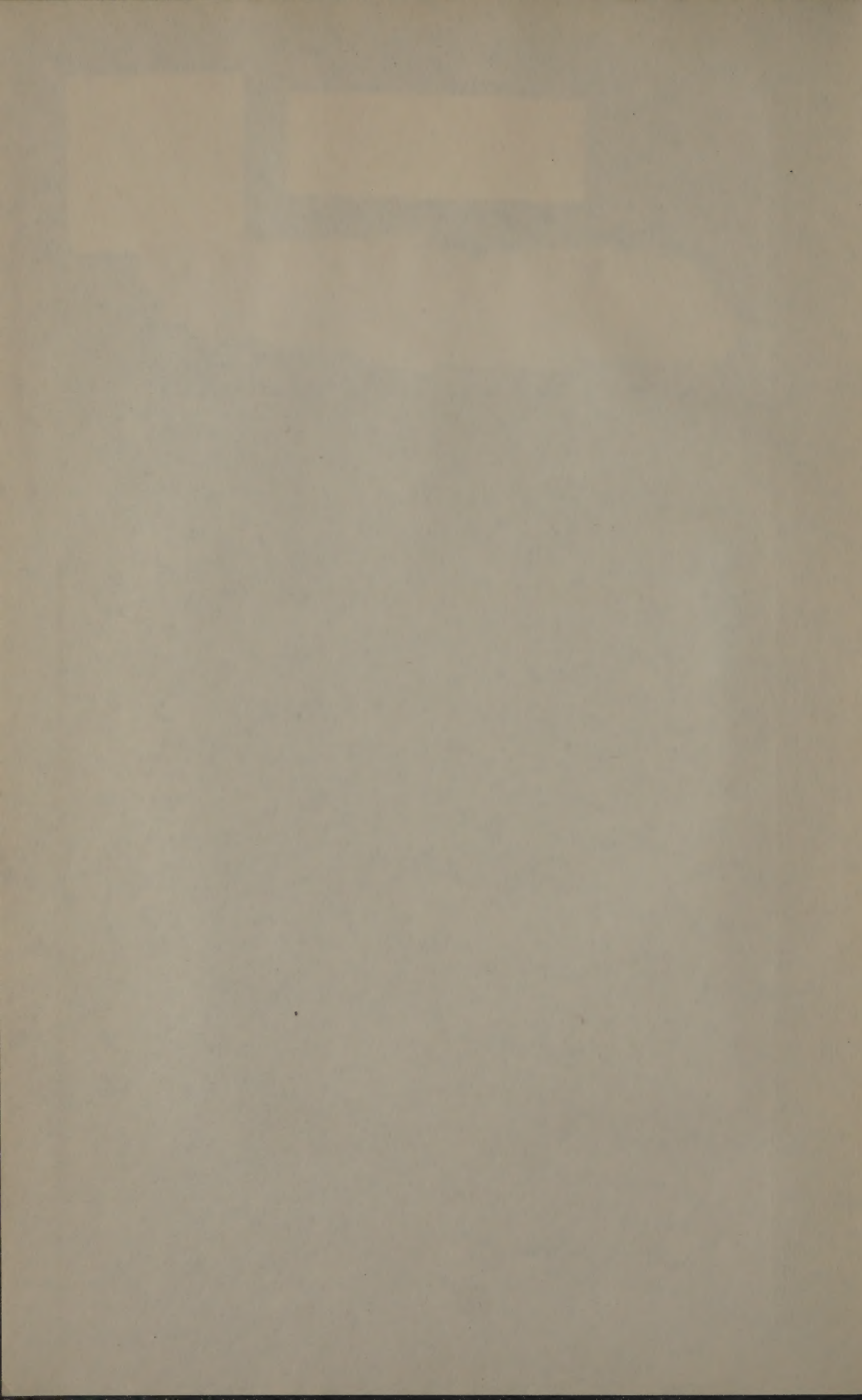
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UNITED STATES CATHOLIC HISTORICAL  
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MONOGRAPH SERIES XV

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# OLD ST. PETER'S

THE MOTHER CHURCH OF CATHOLIC  
NEW YORK (1785-1935)

LEO RAYMOND RYAN, A.B., M.S. (E.)

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## PREFACE

One hundred and fifty years ago the first Catholic church to be built in the State was erected on Barclay Street, New York, with St. Peter as its patron. It was truly the rock upon which the present Archdiocese of New York, with its hundreds of churches, schools, and other institutions were founded. "This is a pioneer church that witnessed all the struggles of pioneer days," once said the late Monsignor John P. Chidwick. "Every cross that flashes in the morning light on the churches of this city and State speaks eloquently the reverence that must be paid to this old church."<sup>1</sup>

This book is, therefore, a history of the mother church of the State of New York. A parish which originally embraced the whole State and a part of New Jersey, St. Peter's has remained a historic shrine of Catholic faith and devotion.

Many special articles in magazines and newspapers have dealt with its development, but thus far no comprehensive history of the church has been attempted. Most of these historical articles have been based on the work of John Gilmary Shea, in his four-volume *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*. Shea also wrote a short sketch of St. Peter's in his *Catholic Churches of New York City*. Archbishop Bayley, in *Catholic Church on the Island of New York* and John Talbot Smith, in *History of the Catholic Church in New York*, do not attempt a detailed history of this first parish.

Especially on the occasion of the one hundred and fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of St. Peter's is the record of this parish worthy of being written. I have attempted to make it something more than a mere parochial history since St. Peter's history and significance is coincident with that of State and nation. Founded five years before the establishment of the present government of the United States, antedating by a similar period the creation of the American hierarchy, it is the seed of

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<sup>1</sup>New York *Times*, November 24, 1930.



the present marvelous development of the Catholic Church in this great Empire State.

The first three chapters deal with the historic background in which St. Peter's was set. Next come the building of the church under the leadership of St. John de Crèvecoeur; the work of its first pastor, the Capuchin friar Whelan; internal dissensions; the quiet progress under the Dominican O'Brien, and the excellent, though all too short, activity of two remarkable Jesuits, Fathers Kohlmann and Fenwick.

There is more to the history of St. Peter's than an enumeration of warring trustee factions, yet the story of the struggles which ultimately plunged the church into bankruptcy is given proper consideration. Then follow the pastorates of two great intellectuals, Doctors John Power and Charles Constantine Pise, both of whom used their voices and pens in a dignified and moderate defense of Catholic doctrine during the rabid Know Nothing period. With the pastorate of Monsignor William Quinn is linked the redemption of the church property. Though conditions of parish life have changed considerably in the modern period, under Father Michael C. O'Farrell, later the Bishop of Trenton, Monsignor James J. McGean, and the present pastor, the Reverend Doctor James E. Noonan, St. Peter's has attempted to meet the needs of a newer type of congregation, composed of a vast army of "skyscraper" workers.

St. Peter's Free School which was established in 1800 and formed part of the parish organization, deserves, as the cornerstone of the present diocesan school system, a chapter in itself.

A conclusion, comparing the modest start of the Church in New York with its present growth and development offers some opportunity for reflection upon the historic significance of St. Peter's, the "Mother Church of the State of New York."

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Thomas F. Meehan, K.S.G., Editor of the United States Historical Society's publications, for his extremely valuable suggestions and help during the progress of this work. I thank the Very Reverend Victor F. O'Daniel, S.T.M., Litt.D., of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D. C., for his interest and kindness. The Reverend Doctor James E. Noonan, pastor of St. Peter's has given unfailingly of his time to the author in the search for material. Especially do I wish to thank the Reverend Demetrius B. Zema, S.J., head of the Department of History, Fordham University, at whose instance the work was begun. To him and to Doctor John Schuler, Professor of American History at the same institution, I am grateful for constructive advice and assistance in the completion of this Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of History at Fordham University.

TO  
THE REVEREND JAMES E. NOONAN, LL.D.,  
PASTOR OF ST. PETER'S CHURCH  
AND  
THE REVEREND DEMETRIUS B. ZEMA, S.J.  
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, FORDHAM UNIVERSITY



## ST. PETER'S CHURCH

Where the travel-tides' ebbing and flow never stops;  
'Midst the clamor of mart and mill;  
Where each new steel-ribbed giant his neighbor o'ertops  
'Midst the splendors of art and skill,  
Stands a temple of God, full a century old,  
That our forebears built stone on stone,  
When the faithful were few, and far-scattered the fold,  
And the pilgrimage long and lone.  
Up its broad granite steps, 'neath its tall-pillared porch,  
Through its Roman-arched doorway wide,  
To the Altar where angels twain, each bearing torch,  
Kneel, adoring, their Master beside  
Countless thousands, now gone at the Death-Angel's call,  
'Oft have thronged, here to pray and praise;  
While Saints Peter and Paul, from their niche in the wall,  
Vigil keep, night and day, always;  
And sweet Mary and Joseph their blessings bestow  
From their Altars still, side by side;  
Still the dear Sacred Heart doth its burning love show,  
And there still hangs the Christ crucified.  
But while all are in place as in days long gone by,  
Oh miraculous! Marvel! Behold!  
Holy Love, in glad offering to God the Most High  
Has transformed them to marble and gold.

Still at Matins, at Prime, and serene Vesper hour  
Come the toilers from far and near  
To obtain from their Lord consolation and power  
From the conflicts that scar and sear.  
And their prayers for the donors and pastor ascend,  
For the privilege given to come  
Whensoever they will, be they stranger or friend,  
To their God in His beautiful home.

H. A. W., March 9, 1906







OLD ST. PETER'S, 1785-1836



# CATHOLIC HISTORICAL RECORDS AND STUDIES

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## OLD ST. PETER'S

THE MOTHER CHURCH OF CATHOLIC NEW YORK,  
(1785—1935)

### CHAPTER I

#### RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN NEW YORK UNDER DUTCH AND ENGLISH RULE

The religious policy of the government of New Netherland was patterned after that of the home country. Although "Holland was at that time [c. 1609] the open asylum for the oppressed of all lands,"<sup>1</sup> religious freedom or liberty, in the full sense of those terms, did not exist in the Dutch Republic. Neither did it exist in New Netherland. Of the Protestant groups, the Puritans alone were accorded full freedom of worship; the Jew was reluctantly granted a limited toleration for economic reasons; while Catholicism as a faith was proscribed.<sup>2</sup>

If the Dutch Republic was a Calvinistic State which even repressed a more moderate Calvinism than that sanctioned by the "Institutes of the Christian Religion"<sup>3</sup> so, too, did the government of New Netherland deal with Dissenters, Lutheran, Quaker, and Jew, when they attempted to place their faiths upon an organized basis in the province.<sup>4</sup>

There was between the Church in New Netherland and the Dutch West India Company substantially the same relationship as between the Church and the State abroad. For example, calls upon ministers were not valid until approved by the Company.<sup>5</sup>

The Synod of North Holland, in 1624, determined that the direction of the churches in the East Indies was to remain with the churches and classes within whose bounds offices of the East India Company were located. This principle was applied, likewise, to the management of the churches in the territories of the Dutch West India Company.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the management of church

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

affairs in New Netherland was subject to the supervision of the Classes of Hoorn and Enkhuysen, and since the business of the Company drifted more and more away from these ports to that of Amsterdam, after 1628, control of church matters passed into the care of the Classis of Amsterdam.<sup>7</sup>

No religious institutions existed in New Netherland prior to the beginning of organized colonization under the West India Company. The first legal recognition of and the practical establishment of the Dutch Church dates from 1629 when the West India Company granted to Patroons in New Netherland a charter of "Freedoms and Exemptions" for the purpose of stimulating immigration to the colony. Section XXVII of this charter placed the responsibility for the support of a minister and schoolmaster upon the patroons and colonists.

In the "New Charter of Patroonships" granted by the Company in 1640, the Dutch Reformed Church was more formally and clearly established in the colony. A clause of the charter provided, "No other religion was to be publicly tolerated or allowed in New Netherlands, save that then taught and exercised by authority in the Reformed Church in the United Provinces, for the inculcation of which the company promised to support and maintain good and fit preachers, schoolmasters, and comforters of the sick."<sup>8</sup>

Although it is true that upon the application of a minister, named Francis Doughty a party of English settlers had been allowed by the Dutch authorities in 1641 to settle at Newtown with the grant of free exercise of their religion; and though this might seem to indicate a relaxation from the severe enforcement of the Act of 1640, prompted by the fact that the Dutch were getting into serious peril and could not afford to offend a class of English whose cooperation was needed;<sup>9</sup> yet it should be remembered that New Englanders who settled in large numbers on Long Island were for the most part Presbyterians and Congregationalists. To the Reformed Dutch, the Presbyterians were recognized as orthodox in "everything," while the Congregationalists were considered orthodox in "fundamentals."<sup>10</sup> Thus, they both received full religious liberty. The Dissenters, however, were considered orthodox in neither doctrine nor policy and, "did not

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enjoy this religious liberty, but liberty of conscience in the Holland sense of the word, which respected the personal belief of the individual, and its expression in the narrow circle of the family, but penalized the organization of dissenting worship in private and public conventicles."<sup>11</sup>

After 1654, however, the Dutch authorities were confronted with the problem of the organization of dissenting groups. Up to this time the Lutherans had joined in the services of the Reformed Dutch Church. They now asked for, and repeatedly renewed their appeal, for the right to establish their own worship and choose a minister of their own faith.

This was denied them because the Dutch in New Netherland opposed the grant on the ground that, if the Lutherans were tolerated, others would demand the same liberty. "So that in time our place would become a receptacle for all sorts of heretics and fanatics."<sup>12</sup> In 1658 Stuyvesant was admonished by the Company after complaints had reached it that Lutherans had been imprisoned, and he was instructed to use moderation. Finally, a compromise was effected whereby the Lutherans "conformed," an agreement having been made upon the formula to be used in administering Baptism.

Towards Quakers, the Dutch practiced little toleration. Records bear out the fact that Quakers were whipped, sentenced to hard labor, imprisoned and banished.<sup>13</sup> In 1662 an ordinance was passed by Stuyvesant and his council against any religious meetings other than those of the Dutch Reformed Church under penalty of fifty guilders for every person present. The penalties fell heavily upon the Quakers in Jamaica. Fines and imprisonments were enforced. John Bowne, one of the leaders, having been banished, went to Holland and complained to the Company, with the result that its Directors reprimanded Stuyvesant in 1663.<sup>14</sup>

Although Stuyvesant's "unholy zeal" has been considered largely responsible for the persecution, yet the Directors definitely indicated that they wished him to relax his policy for fear that it might discourage immigration rather than that they disapproved of his policy of excluding Dissenters.<sup>15</sup>

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

In 1654 and 1655 Jews from Holland entered New Netherland. Their arrival was the occasion of a letter sent by Dominie Megapolensis to the Classis of Amsterdam protesting against their admission.<sup>16</sup>

They report that . . . they would build here a synagogue. This causes among the congregation here a great deal of complaint and murmuring. . . . Therefore we request . . . that these godless rascals . . . may be sent away from here. For as we have here Papists, Mennonites and Lutherans among the Dutch; also many Puritans or Independents, and many Atheists and various other servants of Baal . . . it would create a still greater confusion, if the obstinate and immovable Jews came to settle here.<sup>17</sup>

Shortly thereafter, the Directors informed Stuyvesant that although they would like to agree with the request, nevertheless, in view of the loss sustained by the Jews in the taking of Brazil, and because of the financial interest Jews had in the shares of the Company, they were to be admitted to New Netherland on condition that the poor among them would be supported by their own race and not become a burden to the Company or the community.<sup>18</sup>

There was one exception, however, to the policy of denial of the right of Dissenters to organize as religious groups; namely, in the territory formerly known as New Sweden, along the Delaware, where Lutherans were permitted to worship freely and enjoy the services of their own ministers. Mennonites, who settled on the Delaware in 1662 were also permitted a simple religious service of their own.<sup>19</sup>

There remains to be considered the Dutch attitude towards Catholics. The assistance rendered by the Dutch to captive Jesuit missionaries in the northern part of the province of New Netherland is well known. To them gratitude is due for the rescue of Father Isaac Jogues and Father Bressani from Mohawk torture, and the help given Father Poncet after his release by the Mohawks.

Father Jogues was taken captive by the Mohawk Indians in 1642. Having been subjected to inhuman and barbarous cruelty and having been a witness to the martyrdom of his companion, René Goupil, Father Jogues was finally permitted a slight degree



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of freedom. He then availed himself of the opportunity to instruct some Indians in the Faith. Arendt Van Curler, commander of Fort Orange, made several efforts to rescue Jogues. The Indians, however, would have none of his appeals nor his presents. Finally, when Jogues' life was in imminent danger as a result of a Mohawk defeat by the French, Van Curler advised him to escape. Father Jogues pondered the proposal and finally hid in the hold of a sloop in the river. The Iroquois were incensed at the escape of their prisoner and demanded his surrender from the Dutch. Father Jogues refused to escape until the trouble with the Indians was settled. He was then taken ashore and hidden in a garret. After negotiations for his ransom had been carried on for six weeks, he was finally released by the payment to the Indians of about one hundred pieces of gold.<sup>20</sup> Father Jogues was then sent to New Amsterdam under the escort of Dominie Megapolensis, the Dutch minister at Fort Orange. Here he was most graciously received by the Director-General Kieft at whose house he was entertained and who later arranged his passage home to Europe.<sup>21</sup>

In 1644 the Dutch had occasion to extend their help and protection to another Jesuit missionary, Father Bressani. A captive of the Iroquois, "beaten, mangled and mutilated," and forced to witness one of his companions boiled and eaten, he was rescued by the Dutch, who purchased his freedom for a large sum.<sup>22</sup> They then nursed him until he was well and brought him to New Amsterdam where he was hospitably welcomed by Governor Kieft. The safe-conduct which Kieft gave to Bressani prior to his departure for La Rochelle, France, reads in part: "Christian Charity requires that he be humanly treated by those into whose hand he may happen to fall. Wherefore we request all governors, viceroys, or their lieutenants and captains, that they would afford him their favor in going and returning, promising to do the same, on like occasion."<sup>23</sup>

The year 1651 marks a break in the policy of the Directors of the Dutch West India Company regarding the ransoming of French missionaries. They wrote Stuyvesant that the "ransom of Christian captives from the savages was the duty of all Christians, but everyone is bound to care for himself and his own

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people."<sup>24</sup> They stated that Frenchmen had been ransomed before at the expense of the Company and the community, for which they had not been repaid, "so that we think when complaints reach France, they will take care of their countrymen."<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Dutch kindness to the missionaries was shown to Father Poncet, who was captured by the Mohawks in 1653. Subjected to persecution and forced to witness a companion roasted alive, he was adopted by an old crone and after a while was made the condition by the Governor of Canada of a restoration of peace with the Indians. Brought to Fort Orange to be clothed and given surgical attention, he was coldly received by the Dutch Commissary, Dyckman, despite the fact that the French Governor, M. de Lauzon, had written recommending that attention be given him. Nevertheless, he was kindly received by "a worthy old Walloon," at whose house he received hospitality. He was furnished with clothes and given medical attention by other settlers of the Fort, who brought him presents on the day of his departure and expressed regret at his leaving them.<sup>26</sup>

A third Jesuit missionary to visit New Amsterdam was Father Simon Le Moyne. He arrived in the city in the fall of 1657, after having spent much time as a missionary among the Mohawk and Onondaga Indians.<sup>27</sup>

After the temporary closing of the Iroquois mission field as a result of a fresh French-Indian outbreak, Le Moyne availed himself of the opportunity to visit Rensselaerswyck and New Amsterdam.

He was graciously welcomed by Governor Stuyvesant who made his visit the occasion of asking the assistance of the priest in furthering trade relations with New France. Le Moyne later cemented a trade pact that was satisfactory to both governments.

His arrival at New Amsterdam, however, did not evoke from Dominie Megapolensis the same enthusiasm and genuine affection as that of his predecessors, Jogues and Bressani. Whereas the latter two entered the city in a maimed and pitiable condition, Le Moyne appeared ready to perform the tasks of a healthy and vigorous missionary. The rather sharp letter that Megapolensis sent to the Classis of Amsterdam regarding Le Moyne and the

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suspected purpose of his visit is evidence that he drew the line when it came to tolerating any acts of Le Moyne as a religious agent in New Amsterdam. In one letter he says:

There is much need of two more learned and godly ministers in this province, as the Jesuits in Canada or Nova Francia are seeking to force an entrance among us, and introduce their idolatries and superstitions. For when the French made peace with our Indians, the Mohawks, several Jesuits went among them, and have since continued there. One of them named Simon Le Moyne has been several times at Fort Orange, and last fall came here to Manhattan, doubtless to encourage the papists, both Dutch and French, residing here, and to observe the condition of our affairs.<sup>28</sup>

Later, he wrote a letter to the same body in which he reviews the assistance given to Jogues and Bressani. He then says the following of Le Moyne:

He represented that he had heard the other Jesuits speak much of me, who had also highly praised me for the favors and benefits I had shown them; that he, therefore, could not, while present here, neglect personally to pay his respects to me, and thank me for the kindness extended to their Society. 1. He told me that during his residence among our Indians he had discovered a salt spring; . . . and the water was so salt that he had himself boiled excellent salt from it. 2. There was also another spring which furnished oil. . . 3. There was another spring of hot sulphurous water. If paper and dry materials were thrown into it, they became ignited. Whether all this is true, or a mere Jesuit lie, I will not decide. I mention the whole on the responsibility and authority of the Jesuit.

He told me that he had lived about twenty years among the Indians. When he was asked what fruit had resulted from his labors, and whether he had taught the Indians anything more than to make the sign of the cross, and such like superstitions, he answered that he was not inclined to debate with me, but wanted only to chat. He spent eight days here, and examined everything in our midst. He then liberally dispensed his indulgences, for he said to the Papists (in the hearing of one of our people who understand French), that they need not go to Rome; that he had as full power from the Pope to forgive their sins, as if they were to go to Rome. He then returned and resided in the country of the Mohawks the whole winter.<sup>29</sup>



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Considering the attitude of the Dutch towards Catholics, it may be said that in several instances of contact with Jesuits, it was decidedly friendly; on other occasions it was marked by indifference; and sometimes it was suspicious and unfriendly.<sup>80</sup>

The number of Catholics in New Netherland was so insignificant that they did not constitute a problem for the authorities. However, it is safe to say that had there been sufficient Catholics to constitute a minority as large as the Lutherans or any other dissenting group, the consistent Dutch policy towards dissenters would have prevailed. That they were not more actively opposed to the activity of Jesuit missionaries among the Indians within the borders of New Netherland may be explained by several factors. First, Indian relations with the Dutch were primarily for trade. Secondly, Jesuits did not attempt to introduce Catholic worship in Dutch settlements. Thirdly, the Dutch minimized the success of Jesuit work among the Indians in view of their own lack of success among the Iroquois.

At the close of Dutch rule in New Netherland, Catholicism had few adherents in the province. Even among the Iroquois Indians, the results were disappointing in view of their fickleness of character.<sup>81</sup>

Among the white inhabitants of New Netherland, there were hardly any at all. In 1626, two Portuguese Catholics are noted in a company of soldiers sent up the Hudson to defend Fort Orange. St. Isaac Jogues confessed two Catholics during his stay at New Amsterdam, one a Portuguese woman, the other an Irishman from Virginia. Two Catholics were found by Father Poncet in Beverwyck in 1653. One was a Belgian from Brussels, the other a Frenchman. According to Dominie Megapolensis, Father Le Moyne arrived at New Amsterdam presumably to attend "the papists, both Dutch and French, residing here."<sup>82</sup> How many there were, however, is problematical. It is known that French privateers were then in port so that his ministrations were made partially to transients.

The only record of Catholic settlement on Long Island is that of the sentence imposed in Breuckelen on "Nicolaes the Frenchman." Refusing to pay his share for the support of the Dutch



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Reformed Church, he was fined six guilders twelve for having "behaved very insolently and stubbornly," and making the "frivolous" excuse "that he was a Catholic." (1658).<sup>33</sup>

At the end of Dutch rule in New Netherland it may be said that organized Catholicism was unknown and that the number of Catholics in the province was extremely small.

Following the establishment of English rule in New York a change in religious policy occurred which was particularly fortunate for Catholics. The administration of the liberal Governor Dongan was to be, however, but a short interval to a subsequent period marked by bigotry and intolerance. If Catholicism had made little progress under Dutch rule, it accomplished hardly much more during the one hundred or more years that New York was a colony of England.

With the change from Dutch to English rule, uncertainty existed as to the status of the Dutch Reformed Church. It remained, nevertheless, under the supervision of the Classis of Amsterdam. A most liberal code, popularly known as "The Duke's Laws," and applicable to Long Island and Staten Island, was drawn up during the administration of Governor Nichols. It contained a provision for the support of religion at the public expense, the erection of a church building in each parish, and the election of a properly ordained Protestant minister by the majority of the householders of the parish. A noteworthy provision contained the guarantee that no person professing Christianity was to "be molested, fined, or imprisoned, for differing in judgments in matters of religion."<sup>34</sup>

In 1673 the Dutch recaptured New Netherland and held it until the following year, when Dutch rule ended forever. As an evidence of the persistent official intolerance of the Dutch authorities, during this interval of Dutch rule, the so-called "Colve Charter" provided that "The Schout and Magistrates each in his quality shall take care that the Reformed Christian Religion conformable to the Synod of Dordrecht shall be maintained without suffering any other Sects attempting anything contrary thereto."<sup>35</sup> It likewise directed that all provincial officers were to be chosen from "only such as are of the Reformed Christian Religion or at least well affected toward it."<sup>36</sup>

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Under a new patent issued by King Charles to the Duke of York, Colonel Edmund Andros became Governor. Upon his arrival, he confirmed "The Duke's Laws" and allowed the Dutch inhabitants to retain their customary church privileges. He was instructed by James to permit "all persons of what Religion soever, quietly to inhabit" the province and not to disturb or disquiet anyone "for or by reason of their differing opinions in matters of Religion."<sup>37</sup>

When Andros was recalled in 1680, he left in his place as Commander-in-chief, his assistant, Anthony Brockholls, a Catholic. Although the English law since 1673 required office holders to subscribe to a Test Oath which was, in effect, a renunciation of the doctrines of the Catholic Church, this was as yet not applicable to the American Colonies. James, as Duke of York, was compelled by it to surrender all his offices under the Crown, yet it affected neither Brockholls nor Thomas Dongan who succeeded to the Governorship in 1683.

Dongan received no special instructions with regard to religious affairs since those given Andros were deemed sufficient.<sup>38</sup> He was delegated to call a general assembly upon his arrival in the province.<sup>39</sup> This, the first legislature convened in New York, drew up the famous "Charter of Libertys and Privileges" (1683).

As to religion, it guaranteed to all peaceable Christians entire freedom of conscience and religion; full enjoyment to all existing Christian churches in the province of "all their former freedoms of their religion in Divine Worship and Church Discipline;" and it contained a proviso that all other Christian Churches that might come thereafter were to have the same privileges.<sup>40</sup>

Upon the accession of James II to the throne in 1684, the Charter of Liberties was vetoed because it placed limitations upon the prerogatives of the King.<sup>41</sup>

In 1683, during Dongan's administration, the first Jesuits of the English Province arrived in New York. Upon the solicitation of James, permission was granted by the Father General of the Order for a Jesuit to accompany Dongan to New York.<sup>42</sup> Father Thomas Harvey came, not only as his chaplain, but also for purpose of founding a Jesuit college in the City of New York.<sup>43</sup> It is

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also known that Dongan wished to overcome the influence exercised by French Jesuit missionaries upon the Iroquois tribes.<sup>44</sup> Father Harvey was later joined by Fathers Henry Harrison and Charles Gage, who, with two lay Brothers, comprised the establishment in the city. Mass was said for the first known time in New York City in a room in the house of the Governor, located within the Fort.<sup>45</sup>

The English Jesuits, because of language difficulty, never entered upon the Indian Mission, but devoted themselves to missionary work throughout New York and New Jersey and to the maintenance of their Latin School. That this school received the patronage of some prominent Protestant inhabitants of the city is evident from the letters of Jacob Leisler.<sup>46</sup> There were, however, few Catholics in New York to support the College. Dominie Selyns reported to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1682 that there were no papists, "or if there are any, they attend our services or that of the Lutherans."<sup>47</sup> Two years later, Dongan reported "few Roman Catholicks" in his enumeration of religious groups in the province.<sup>48</sup>

In his administration of the affairs of the province, Dix pays the following tribute to Dongan, "A devout Roman Catholic by profession, he nevertheless ruled his Protestant colony with absolute impartiality and won universal respect and esteem."<sup>49</sup>

Wilson says that he showed himself to be

wise, highminded, and disinterested. The instructions of Dongan were express, and he faithfully carried them out so far as he was able, never allowing personal views to interfere with official duty. The situation in which he found himself was indeed remarkable, the Roman Catholic Governor being strictly commanded by a Roman Catholic King to support, with all the weight of his authority, an ecclesiastical system opposed to that of the church of Rome.<sup>50</sup>

Other historians have been equally generous in their appraisal of his worth. Yet, he worked under a decided disadvantage.

The Latin School finally closed not only because of the lack of support but because of the growing political and religious hostility to the Governor. The population, composed largely of Calvinists,



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resented the presence of a "Papist" Governor.<sup>51</sup> When James decided to join the Province of New York to the Dominion of New England in 1688, even the replacement of Dongan by Andros did not satisfy the inhabitants.

The final downfall of James in 1688 led to the beginning of a period of religious persecution that did not cease until after the American Revolution. Dongan's rule was succeeded by that of the usurper Leisler whom Dix characterizes as being great "in nothing but boldness, impudence, and a shrewd wit and cleverness. He persecuted Protestants and Catholics alike; ruled with a high hand by no authority save his own."<sup>52</sup>

Leisler carried on an active campaign to incite the people against what could only be imaginery "papists" and "papisticall designs."<sup>53</sup> He raged vehemently against "Popery" at a time when there were few Catholics and not a Catholic Church in New York. After Leisler was removed and executed by order of Governor Sloughter, in 1691, a period of anti-Catholic legislation began.

King William, in his Commission and Instructions to Governor Sloughter, directed him to apply the Test Oath, which had been in effect in England since 1673. This effectively deprived Catholics of the right to hold any public office, since it required, as a condition for office-holding, a sworn denial of a belief in Transubstantiation as well as other doctrines of the Catholic Faith.<sup>54</sup> The Charter of Liberties of 1683 had provided religious freedom to all. Now, in 1691, the Assembly passed a bill similar to it in its general outline but which contained the following clause, "Always Provided, That nothing herein mentioned or contained shall extend to give liberty to any persons of the Romish Religion to exercise their manner of worship, contrary to the Laws and Statutes of their Majesty's Kingdom of England."<sup>55</sup>

In 1696 a charter was granted to the Dutch Church, by which it was given complete independence in all its affairs.<sup>56</sup> In the following year, Trinity Church was created by Letters Patent from the Crown, under the corporate name of "The Rector and Inhabitants of the City of New York of the Protestant Church of England as by Law Established."<sup>57</sup>

In the same year the Act of 1691, excluding Catholics from



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participating in the "Bill of Rights," was disallowed by the Crown, "probably as being too liberal."<sup>58</sup> This was followed by the Act of 1700, which aimed at driving out the French Catholic missionaries among the Iroquois from the northern and western parts of the State.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, a decade had passed since the closing of Father Harvey's Latin School and yet the fearful dominies were still talking about "the awful menace to the Protestant religion."<sup>60</sup> "And although you will hardly believe it, it is said that low mass was privately heard by some one, although this was asserted to have been done through curiosity."<sup>61</sup>

That there were few Catholic residents in New York about the time to occasion the passage of such an act is evident from the information contained in the answer by the Mayor of the City of New York to a letter of Governor Fletcher. The latter asked for a written list "of all Roman Catholics or such as are reputed Papists," and the answer contained but nine such names, headed by that of Mayor Anthony Brockholls.<sup>62</sup>

The Penal Law of 1700, however, was passed largely through the efforts of Governor Bellomont, a notorious anti-Catholic zealot.<sup>63</sup> Its preamble stated:

Whereas divers Jesuits preists [sic] and popish missionaries have of late, come and for Some time have had their residence in the remote parts of this Province and other his ma'tys adjacent Colonies, who by their wicked and Subtle Insinuations Industriously Labour to Debauch Seduce and w'thdraw the Indians from their due obedience unto his most Sacred ma'ty and to Excite and Stir them up to Sedition Rebellion and open Hostility against his ma'tys Govern't.<sup>64</sup>

It provided that every priest remaining in the province after November 1, 1700 should

be deemed and Accounted an incendiary and disturber of the publick peace and Safety and an Enemy to the true Christian Religion and shal be adjudged to Suffer perpetuall Imprisonm't and if any person being So Sentenced and actually Imprisoned shall break prison and make his Escape and be afterwards retaken he shall Suffer such paines of Death penalties and forfeitures as in Cases of ffelony.<sup>65</sup>

Anyone who harbored a Catholic priest was subject to a fine of

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two hundred pounds, and was to stand on the pillory for three days.

In the following year (1701) "all Papists and Popish recusants" were "prohibited from voting for members of assembly or any office whatever from thenceforth and forever."<sup>66</sup> This was exactly eighteen years after a Catholic governor, representing a Catholic proprietor, had proclaimed complete toleration for all Christians, and had established the first assembly in the province.<sup>67</sup>

The only occasion upon which the extreme penalty of the law of 1700 was carried out was in the case of John Ury, who was hanged in 1741 because of his alleged connection with the "Negro Plot" of that year. Fear of Negro insurrections had led to the passage of repressive laws against the Negroes. A previous insurrection of Negroes in 1712 had been overcome by force. At the time of the second "Great Plot" of 1741, there were about two thousand Negro slaves, representing about one-fifth of the total population of the city.<sup>68</sup> A servant woman, Mary Barton, accused certain Negroes of incendiarism, which finally resulted in one-hundred and fifty-four slaves being arrested, fourteen burned, eighteen hanged; not to speak of twenty-four whites, who were jailed, four of whom were executed.<sup>69</sup> In the midst of this furore, a letter arrived from General Oglethorpe in Georgia, warning Northern governments against Spanish priest-spies who supposedly were to burn the principal towns.

John Ury, a non-juring Protestant clergyman, was accused of being a leader in the Plot, and also of being a Catholic priest living in New York in violation of the law of 1700. Although innocent of either charge, he was convicted and hanged at the same time as were several Spanish Catholic Negroes, who had been seized and sold as slaves.<sup>70</sup>

Thus indeed could it be said in 1745 that there was in New York "not the least trace of popery."<sup>71</sup> This dismal period for Catholicism remained until after the American Revolution. Hardly a trace can be found of the existence of Catholics in New York. Unquestionably, the legal status of Catholics in the colony, and the bigoted attitude taken towards them were sufficient not only to

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keep them from settling there, but also to discourage any who might have possessed the faith from announcing the fact.

In 1755, a number of unfortunate French Acadians entered New York, having been deprived of their property in Nova Scotia for the crime of being "popish recusants."<sup>72</sup> They were scattered through the colony under conditions of indenture and no trace of them appeared at the time of the establishment of the first church in New York.

In 1763, Bishop Challoner wrote that in the provinces of New England and New York

one may find a Catholic here and there, but they have no opportunity of practicing their religion as no priest visits them, and if we are to judge of the future from the present conditions of the inhabitants, there is not much likelihood that Catholic priests will be permitted to enter these provinces, for the reason that the majority of the inhabitants are strict Presbyterians, or belong to other sects which are likewise most bitterly opposed to Catholicism.<sup>73</sup>

Since Catholics in New York were deprived of their civil rights, and prevented from enjoying the benefits of communication with their own Church, it is not surprising that among the few located in the city, are the names of some Irish Catholics who attended Trinity Church. One historian considers it but natural that Irish Catholic immigrants, being traditionally religious, did not apostasize but "drifted gradually into association with neighbors of other religious beliefs, . . . and eventually . . . joined whatever church happened to be in the locality."<sup>74</sup>

Such was the case of a John Leary, who attended Trinity Church until after the establishment of St. Peter's.<sup>75</sup> Each Easter time, he travelled to Philadelphia to attend Mass, until the custom became a cause of derision among the townspeople, who remarked that "John Leary goes to Philadelphia once a year to get absolution."<sup>76</sup>

Another example is the case of William Mooney, who attended Trinity Church until about 1784.<sup>77</sup> In 1789, however, he was appointed a trustee of St. Peter's Church.<sup>78</sup> That there were many similar instances in other parts of the Colonies is the explanation

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of why so many Irish Catholic settlers drifted into other non-Catholic sects.<sup>79</sup>

The period of Catholic proscription in New York, however, was drawing to a close. With the American Revolution, the whole system of Church establishment was overthrown. In 1777 a convention met at Kingston to draw up a Constitution for the State of New York. It contained an article which provided

that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship without discrimination or preference shall forever hereafter be allowed within this State to all mankind provided that the liberty of conscience hereby granted shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness or justify practices inconsistent with the peace or safety of this State.<sup>80</sup>

Before this clause was finally carried, John Jay proposed an amendment to it which would have required Catholics to swear an oath in denial of the power of an ecclesiastic to absolve from sin.<sup>81</sup> It was voted down, but he did succeed in having carried an amendment to the clause in regard to naturalization, by which persons coming into the State were required to "abjure and renounce all allegiance and subjection to all and every foreign king, prince, potentate, and state in all matters ecclesiastical and civil."<sup>82</sup>

Thus, until the Constitution of the United States became effective, which reserved to Congress the power of making laws of naturalization, Catholics coming from foreign countries were excluded from citizenship by the State Constitution of 1777.<sup>83</sup>



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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Edward T. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1902*, 4th ed., New York, 1902, 16.

<sup>2</sup>Although historians like Brodhead and O'Callaghan represent the religious policy of the home government as tolerant and liberal, Zwierlein shows that such was not the case. John T. Conlon, "The Beginnings of Catholicism in New Netherland, 1609-1664," United States Catholic Historical Society, *Historical Records and Studies* (hereafter to be cited as *Records and Studies*), XXIII, 177-179.

<sup>3</sup>As is stated by F. J. Zwierlein, "Early Dutch Toleration in New Netherland," *Records and Studies*, XVI, 106.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>5</sup>Corwin, *op. cit.*, 22.

<sup>6</sup>Hugh Hastings, ed., *Ecclesiastical Records of the State of New York*, Albany, Lyon, 1901, I, 38.

<sup>7</sup>The classis is an intermediate tribunal ranking between the consistory and synod of the Dutch Reformed Church, and corresponding to the presbytery of the Presbyterian denomination.

<sup>8</sup>Morgan Dix, *A History of the Parish of Trinity Church in the City of New York*, New York, Putman, 1898, I, 30-31. The translation in Brodhead (I, 312) says that no other religion was to be "publicly sanctioned," which Dix declares to be very different from the actual provision, that no religion should be "tolerated." The translation in *New York Col. Docs.* (I, 123) says "publicly admitted." Dix says O'Callaghan brings out the fullest sense of the language in his *New Netherland* (I, 220).

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>10</sup>Frederick J. Zwierlein, *Religion in New Netherland*, Rochester, 1910, 4.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>12</sup>Letter of Revs. Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam, Oct. 6, 1653. Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 317.

<sup>13</sup>O'Callaghan, *New Netherland*, II, 347-9.

<sup>14</sup>Extract of letter in Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 530.

<sup>15</sup>Conlon, *loc. cit.* 184.

<sup>16</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 334-6.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 335-336.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 338.

<sup>19</sup>Conlon, *loc. cit.*, 185.

<sup>20</sup>William Harper Bennett, *Catholic Footsteps in Old New York*, New York, Schwartz, Kirwin, 1909, 33.

<sup>21</sup>The arrival of St. Isaac Jogues in New Amsterdam marks the first entry of a Catholic priest into the boundaries of what is now the City of New York. The fruit of St. Isaac Jogues' mission in the form of a permanent church in that city—St. Peter's—was not realized until one hundred and forty years after.

<sup>22</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 168.

<sup>23</sup>Conlon, *loc. cit.*, 223.

<sup>24</sup>Zwierlein, "Early Dutch Toleration in New Netherland," *loc. cit.*, 107.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>26</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 315-316.

<sup>27</sup>It was in 1654 during the course of a successful visit at Onondaga that he discovered the rich salt springs there.

<sup>28</sup>Megapolensis and Drisius to the Classis of Amsterdam. Sept. 24, 1658, Hastings, *op. cit.* I, 434.

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- <sup>29</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 438-9.  
<sup>30</sup>Conlon, *loc. cit.*, 234.  
<sup>31</sup>Conlon, *loc. cit.*, 238.  
<sup>32</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, I, 434.  
<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 420.  
<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 572.  
<sup>35</sup>E. J. Maguire "An Historical Sketch of the Relations of Church and State in New York," *Records and Studies*, II, 109.  
<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*  
<sup>37</sup>John R. Brodhead, *History of the State of New York, 1609-1691*, New York, 1853-71, II, 183.  
<sup>38</sup>Dix, *op. cit.* I, 55.  
<sup>39</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 841.  
<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 863-65.  
<sup>41</sup>Maguire, *loc. cit.*, 111.  
<sup>42</sup>Thomas Hughes, S.J., *History of the Society of Jesus in America*, I, Part I, 50.  
<sup>43</sup>Henry Foley, S.J., *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus*, London, 1883, II, Part 1, 343.  
<sup>44</sup>J. G. Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, New York, McBride, 1886-92, I, 90f.  
<sup>45</sup>This site is now marked by a commemorative tablet at the entrance to the New York Custom House, Bowling Green. See *Records and Studies*, XVI, 98-9. For an account of the first Mass said in New York State see *Records and Studies* XI, 31-46.  
<sup>46</sup>O'Callaghan, *Documentary History of the State of New York*, Albany, 1849-1851, II, 23, 262.  
<sup>47</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1830.  
<sup>48</sup>Governor Dongan's Report on the State of the Province—1684. Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 879.  
<sup>49</sup>Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 54.  
<sup>50</sup>James G. Wilson, *Memorial History of the City of New York*, New York, New York History Co., 1893, IV, 190-191.  
<sup>51</sup>Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, *History of New York in the Seventeenth Century*, II, 3, 376.  
<sup>52</sup>Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 71.  
<sup>53</sup>O'Callaghan, *Documentary History* II, 17.  
<sup>54</sup>For the text, see Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1012. A facsimile of an "Iron Clad Oath of the Olden Time" used in New York City for the years 1714-1716 with the signatures of Public Officials is contained in the *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, 1869.  
<sup>55</sup>Bradford's Laws, 4, Ed., 1710, cited by Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1016.  
<sup>56</sup>Corwin, *op. cit.*, 79.  
<sup>57</sup>The document is reprinted in full in Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 455 ff. As to whether or not the Ministry Act of 1693 established the Church of England, cf., Corwin, *op. cit.*, 84 ff., with Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 87 ff.  
<sup>58</sup>James R. Bayley, *A Brief Sketch of the Early History of the Catholic Church on the Island of New York*, New York, Catholic Publication Society, 1870, 39.  
<sup>59</sup>Maguire, *loc. cit.*, 113. See text of Council Journal, July 29, 1700, printed in Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1367-1368.  
<sup>60</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 201.  
<sup>61</sup>Letter of certain members of the Dutch Church of New York to the Classis of Amsterdam, Oct. 21, 1698, printed in Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1247.  
<sup>62</sup>*American Catholic Historical Researches*, XIX, 144, V, 93.

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<sup>63</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, I, 356. He was the son of a Colonel Coote, known for his "butcheries of Catholics in Ireland." "When his council voted against it, he voted as a member of the council, and thus produced a tie, on which his casting vote as president gave a majority, and, as governor, he approved it." (Bayley, *op. cit.*, 40-41.)

<sup>64</sup>Complete text is contained in Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1368 ff. See also, Shea, *op. cit.*, I, 357; Maguire, *loc. cit.*, 113-115; Corwin, *op. cit.*, 92-93.

<sup>65</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, II, 1369.

<sup>66</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 215; Bailey, *op. cit.*, 40-41.

<sup>67</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 215.

<sup>68</sup>Herbert J. Priestley, *The Coming of the White Man, 1492-1848*, (Volume I of *A History of American Life*, ed. by Schlesinger and Fox). Macmillan, 1930, 325.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, 324f.

<sup>70</sup>For an account of the Plot, see Horsmanden, *The New York Conspiracy, or a History of the Negro Plot at New York, in 1741*, New York, 1810; J. G. Shea, "The New York Negro Plot of 1741," *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, 1869, 764-71; Ethel King, "The New York Negro Plot of 1741," *Records and Studies*, XX, 173-180.

<sup>71</sup>Letter of Rev. Jennes of Philadelphia to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, *Researches*, XX, 44.

<sup>72</sup>Shea, *The Catholic Churches of New York City*, New York, 1878, 28.

<sup>73</sup>An account of the condition of the Catholic Religion in the English Colonies of America, Bishop Challoner to the Reverend Dr. Stoner, at Rome; cited by Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll, Archbishop of Baltimore, 1735-1815*, New York, The Encyclopedia Press, 1922, 60.

<sup>74</sup>Michael J. O'Brien, *In Old New York, The Irish Dead in Trinity and St. Paul's Churchyards*, New York, American Irish Historical Society, 1928, 8.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>76</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>77</sup>O'Brien, *op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>80</sup>Patrick J. Dignan, *A History of the Legal Incorporation of Catholic Church Property in the United States (1781-1932)*, Washington, The Catholic University of America, 1933, 26.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*; Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, II, 156 f.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 156.

<sup>83</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 52.

## CHAPTER II

### RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS IN THE UNITED STATES ON THE EVE OF THE FOUNDING OF ST. PETER'S

The establishment of St. Peter's Church was effected shortly after the close of the American Revolution. In view of the historic background we have just considered, that event was possible because of the fundamentally social character of the American Revolution. Or rather, it must be borne in mind that the American Revolution, often regarded primarily as a political or economic movement was accompanied by basic changes in the social structure.<sup>1</sup> Revisions in laws regarding religion and its exercise, changes in Church organization and administration, transformation in methods of land holding, abolition of the system of entail and primogeniture, a more liberal and progressive attitude adopted towards debtors, revision of the penal system, and other humanitarian developments are characteristic of the post-war decade.

The signing of the Declaration of Independence had necessitated State action on the modification of colonial charters, which had recognized the authority of the Crown. In the work of revision, Church establishment fared badly.

When the war broke out, an established Church existed in most of the thirteen English colonies. The Congregational Church was supported by general taxation in all of the New England colonies except Rhode Island. The Anglican Church enjoyed like privileges in Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, the Carolinas and in parts of New York. In the revisions of State constitutions that were made during the Revolution, the Anglicans were deprived of their privileges and endowments in the States mentioned, whereas the Congregationalists in New England continued to enjoy the status of members of an established Church.

In Massachusetts the colonial system of compulsory church support was retained in the Constitution of 1780. A dissenting ratepayer, however, could have his tax applied to the support of a church of his own faith if one existed in his locality. This



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provision, intended to be liberal, was interpreted so technically by narrow-minded town officers that for a time it seemed a step backwards.<sup>2</sup> Although the Constitution contained a provision extending toleration to all sects, it still contained a religious qualification for office-holding which bore down on Catholics.<sup>3</sup>

The Constitution of New Hampshire of 1784 continued the illiberal record of the colony. It discriminated in favor of the Protestant religion and required State officers to be Protestants.<sup>4</sup>

Connecticut, like Rhode Island, formed no new State Constitution, since its old charter was used as the basis for its government during the national period. In 1784 Connecticut passed a general toleration for dissenters, but the latter chafed under a law which required them to file a certificate of church allegiance with the town clerk, in order to escape taxation for the Establishment.<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island redeemed itself by repealing, in 1778, its exclusive limitation on the right of Catholics to vote and hold office.<sup>6</sup>

In New Jersey, the Constitution of 1776 provided for freedom of worship but confined office holding to "persons professing a belief in the faith of any Protestant sect."<sup>7</sup>

Pennsylvania, a colony in which Catholics enjoyed a substantial degree of freedom throughout the period prior to the Revolution continued its liberal tradition, and Delaware forbade the establishment of any one religious sect in preference to another. The constitutions of both States, however, required varying degrees of religious belief for office-holding which did not affect Catholics adversely.

Maryland, a colony in which the Anglican Church was suffered by dissenters to remain the Establishment through their dread of the "numerous, able and wealthy Catholics" resident there,<sup>8</sup> granted protection to all Christians and extended the franchise to Catholics (1777).<sup>9</sup>

Virginia, in 1776, provided in its Bill of Rights for complete freedom of conscience; and a ten year struggle, in which Jefferson played the dominant role, resulted in a model statute of religious freedom.

The North Carolina Constitution of 1776 prescribed "That no

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person, who shall deny the being of God, or the truth of the Protestant religion . . . shall be capable of holding any office . . . within this State.”<sup>10</sup>

Two years later, South Carolina declared that “The Christian Protestant religion shall be deemed, and is hereby constituted and declared to be the established religion of this State. All denominations of protestants in this State . . . shall enjoy equal religious and civil privileges.”<sup>11</sup>

In Georgia freedom of conscience was established, but “all members of the legislature” were to “be of the Protestant religion.”<sup>12</sup>

As Cobb summarizes the situation at the time of the formation of the American union,

there was great variety of legal expression on the subject of religion and its civic relations in the different states. By brief grouping of them it appears, that in only two out of the thirteen was full and perfect freedom conceded by law. These were Rhode Island and Virginia. Six of the States, viz., New Hampshire, Connecticut, New Jersey, the two Carolinas, and Georgia insisted on Protestantism. Two were content with the Christian religion; Delaware and Maryland. Four, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and the Carolinas, required assent to the divine inspiration of the Bible. Two, Pennsylvania and South Carolina, demanded a belief in heaven and hell. Three, New York, Maryland, and South Carolina, excluded ministers from Civil office. Two, Pennsylvania and South Carolina, emphasized belief in one eternal God. One, Delaware, required assent to the doctrine of the Trinity. And five, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Maryland, and South Carolina, adhered to a religious establishment. In one, South Carolina, the obnoxious term *toleration* found a constitutional place.<sup>13</sup>

Thus it can be seen that at the close of the Revolution, church establishment still prevailed, particularly in New England; likewise that the movement towards religious liberty or even tolerance was still incomplete.

Another important social aspect of the years immediately following the Revolution was the serious decline in the moral and religious life. The various denominations had suffered severely.<sup>14</sup>

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Many churches were destroyed, damaged or used by the military authorities for hospitals, prisons, storehouses or stables during the war. Old South Church in Boston was used as a riding-school for the British cavalry.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, churches of the Episcopalian denomination remained signally free from such degradation by the British army.

In a chapter entitled "Collapse of Organized Protestantism in the New Republic," Dr. Hall says:

The most complete collapse was that of the Episcopal church, which was hastily disestablished and seemingly went to pieces. . . . Nor was Episcopacy the only organized form of Protestantism to suffer. The "Wesleyan Connection" lost nearly all its ministers, and as Wesley was very pronouncedly against the cause of Independence, only the personal influence of Francis Asbury . . . was left.<sup>16</sup>

Quakers, divided and weakened at the end of the war, suffered both in property and influence.<sup>17</sup> In a similar way, the Congregational churches, forced to combat a rising tide of anti-Trinitarian views that gradually led to the organization of the Unitarian Church, felt the strain greatly.

Adams points out that in two counties of Western Massachusetts, whereas thirty-three towns had ministers, throughout the Revolution, thirty-nine had none.<sup>18</sup> In Maryland, but eighteen or twenty rectors remained at the close of the war, whereas before the war there were forty-four. Out of ninety-five parishes in Virginia, twenty-three were extinct or deserted, and thirty-four others were without ministers. Of ninety-one clergymen in that State, only twenty-eight remained at the end of the Revolution, and only fifteen continued in the same churches!<sup>19</sup>

These troubles of the churches were the result not only of financial difficulties, such as decrease in income, depreciation of paper money and payment in kind, but of the infidelity and indifference which marked the period.<sup>20</sup>

Thanks to the introduction of English rationalistic works, Deism acquired at first a following among the aristocratic intellectuals. By 1784, however, with the publication of Ethan Allen's *Reason the Only Oracle of Man*, Deism became a movement

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somewhat bolder in tone.<sup>21</sup> In his rejection of revealed religion, Allen paved the way for a more general assault upon Christian revelation.

Infidelity and atheism became fashionable, especially among the American students and educated men. Princeton had only two students who professed to be Christians in 1782. Bowdoin had one. The Yale College Church had but five such in 1783. Among the middle and lower classes of the people an appalling religious and moral indifference prevailed. Atheistic literature circulated freely.<sup>22</sup>

Although these accounts may be exaggerated beyond fact, nevertheless free thought and deistic propaganda infected American Protestantism until the "Second Awakening" got under way by 1797.

With the attainment of independence by the United States, several of the denominations found it necessary, or expedient, to modify or to reorganize altogether their forms of church government.

The Episcopalian denomination, especially, found difficulty with regard to the ordination of candidates for the ministry. There was no bishop of that church in America during the colonial period. Indeed, all dissenters from Anglicanism possessed the paralyzing fear that one such might be sent here who, consequently, might want to dominate the administration of church affairs. John Adams said:

The objection was not only to the office of bishop, though that was dreaded, but to the authority of Parliament on which it must be founded. The reasoning was this: There is no power less than Parliament which can create bishops in America. But if Parliament can erect dioceses and appoint bishops, they may introduce the whole hierarchy, establish titles, establish religion, forbid dissenters, and make schism heresy. . . .<sup>23</sup>

Although the question of the bishopric was seriously debated in Boston newspapers as late as 1785, the political grounds for opposition to the appointment of a bishop were largely removed by that time.<sup>24</sup>

All Episcopal ministers were bound to take upon ordination



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the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, acknowledging the English King as the head of the Church. When a young American divinity student appeared before the Bishop of London for ordination in 1784, the latter rudely refused to ordain anyone going back to America. The Archbishop of Canterbury sustained the refusal, and placed the responsibility for acting upon Parliament. In the meantime, Samuel Seabury, sent by the Episcopal Church in Connecticut to England for consecration as bishop, found similar difficulty in view of the required oaths. He was, however, consecrated by three non-juring bishops of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. After favorable action by Parliament in setting aside the oaths for American candidates, three American bishops were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

There was thus established a national Episcopal Church which, in 1789, drew up a constitution. It separated itself from the "Mother Church" in England; called itself the "Protestant" Episcopal Church and gave to the laity almost as much power as to the ministry.<sup>25</sup>

The Methodist Church, likewise, required a radical change in its organization. Up to 1784, it had been under the control of John Wesley, but in that year, a Methodist Conference was called at Baltimore at which Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, having previously been designated by Wesley, were elected joint Superintendents—a title which was later changed to bishop.<sup>26</sup> In 1789, the Presbyterians held their first General Assembly in the United States at Philadelphia. The First General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church met in 1792, and the Universalists had their first General Convention in 1786.<sup>27</sup>

Just as the Revolution had occasioned changes in the organization of the various Protestant denominations, so too did it end a dependence of the Catholic Church in America upon English ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

Prior to 1757, although missionaries in the English colonies in America got their jurisdiction from ecclesiastical superiors in England, no documentary evidence existed in Rome to validate this authority.<sup>28</sup> In that year, however, the Vicar Apostolic of London was formally given such jurisdiction by the Sacred Con-

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gregation of Propaganda Fide. That this was an inconvenient arrangement is evident from the attempts of Dr. Challoner, the Vicar Apostolic, (1759-1781), to relieve himself of the responsibility by the appointment of a Vicar Apostolic or a Bishop for the English colonies. The latter move, however, received opposition from American Catholics and the Jesuits in Maryland for serious reasons.<sup>29</sup>

Throughout the Revolution, therefore, American Catholics were still theoretically subject to the jurisdiction of the London vicariate. This is evident from the fact that the vicar general of Dr. Challoner in the colonies, Father John Lewis, was recognized as his representative. In 1783, however, the successor of Dr. Challoner refused to exercise power over the Church in America.<sup>30</sup> In June of the same year, Father Lewis convened a preliminary meeting of six deputies of the American clergy at Whitemarsh, Maryland, to provide a constitution for the Church. A "Form of Government" was proposed and at the next meeting in November its adoption was postponed until the following year. The Chapter, however, drew up a petition to the Pope asking that Father Lewis be made their superior, with certain episcopal privileges.<sup>31</sup> Considering that this petition was not sufficiently respectful in tone, a second was sent in which permission to elect their own superior was requested and stating that the United States Government would not permit the presence of a Bishop in the country.<sup>32</sup>

Before a final decision was arrived at by the Holy See, an attempt was made to enlist the aid of Benjamin Franklin, the American representative at Paris, to facilitate an arrangement between the French King and the American Congress, whereby an ecclesiastic, resident in France, would be appointed superior over the Catholics in the United States. This, if successful, would have made the Catholic Church in the young republic subject to foreign control. Franklin at first acquiesced unwittingly in the scheme and communicated with the French prime minister, Vergennes, as well as with the Continental Congress. The latter body, however, unknown to the American clergy at the time, refused to consider a matter which, it felt, was beyond its juris-

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diction and so notified Franklin. The intrigue came to the attention of English associates of the Maryland Jesuits, who informed Franklin that the proposal should not be admitted without first being submitted to the consideration of the American clergy and especially to John Carroll.<sup>33</sup> Franklin immediately changed his attitude and thenceforward lent all his influence to the selection of Carroll, of whose ability he had had personal knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

On June 19, 1784, Cardinal Antonelli announced the confirmation by the Pope of the nomination of John Carroll to be Prefect Apostolic of the United States, and also the decree putting an end to English ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the former English colonies. Because of certain cramping clauses concerning the granting of faculties to priests newly coming to this country, Carroll at first hesitated to take the appointment; but in February of 1785 he wrote his acceptance to Cardinal Antonelli.

It is in this letter that we are given an insight into the status of religion in the American States. He reported that in Maryland there were about 15,800 Catholics, of which 3,000 were Negro slaves. These were served by nineteen priests. Pennsylvania had a Catholic population of 7,000 with five priests. Virginia had no more than 200, with no resident priest. "Many other Catholics are said to be scattered in that and other States, who are utterly deprived of all religious ministry."<sup>35</sup>

Dealing with the moral condition of Catholics of the time, the letter confirms the general tendency of the post-war period. Lack of fervor, failure of immigrant Catholics to comply with Easter duty, and a general condition of relaxed morality existed.<sup>36</sup>

Concerning New York, we find this account:

In the State of New York I hear that there are at least 1,500. (Would that some spiritual succor could be afforded them!) They have recently, at their own expense, sent for a Franciscan Father from Ireland, and he is said to have the best testimonials as to his learning and life; he had arrived a little before I received the letters in which faculties were transmitted to me, communicable to my fellow-priests. I was for a time in doubt whether I could properly approve this priest for the administration of the sacraments. I have

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now, however, decided, especially as the feast of Easter is so near, to consider him as one of my fellow-priests, and to grant him faculties, and I trust that my decision will meet your approbation.<sup>37</sup>



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### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Allan Nevins, *The American States During and After the Revolution 1775-1789*, New York, Macmillan 1924, 420.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 422.
- <sup>3</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 21.
- <sup>4</sup>Sanford H. Cobb, *The Rise of Religious Liberty in America*, New York, Macmillan, 1902, 500.
- <sup>5</sup>Nevins, *op. cit.*, 425.
- <sup>6</sup>Peter Condon, "Constitutional Freedom of Religion and The Revivals of Religious Intolerance," *Records and Studies* II, 415.
- <sup>7</sup>Robert Baird, *Religion in America*, New York, Harper, 1856, 248; Shea, *History of Catholic Church in United States*, II, 158.
- <sup>8</sup>Nevins, *op. cit.*, 429.
- <sup>9</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 504.
- <sup>10</sup>Condon, *loc. cit.*, II, 410.
- <sup>11</sup>Cobb, *op. cit.*, 505. This provision was abolished in 1790. See Dignan, *op. cit.*, 15.
- <sup>12</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 15.
- <sup>13</sup>Cobb, 507.
- <sup>14</sup>Lars P. Qualben, *A History of the Christian Church*, New York, Nelson, 1933, 439.
- <sup>15</sup>J. Franklin Jameson, *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1926, 413.
- <sup>16</sup>Thomas Cuming Hall, *The Religious Background of American Culture*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1930, 178.
- <sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup>Jas. T. Adams, *New England in the Republic*, Boston, Little, Brown, 1926, 75.
- <sup>19</sup>Jameson, *op. cit.*, 145 f.
- <sup>20</sup>Adams, *op. cit.*, 75.
- <sup>21</sup>Herbert M. Morais, *Deism in Eighteenth Century America*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1934, 17.
- <sup>22</sup>Qualben, *op. cit.*, 440.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 430.
- <sup>24</sup>Hall, *op. cit.*, 191.
- <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.
- <sup>26</sup>Baird, *op. cit.*, 490.
- <sup>27</sup>Harry J. Carman, *Social and Economic History of the United States*, Boston, Heath, 1930, I, 322.
- <sup>28</sup>Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll*, New York, The Encyclopedia Press, 1922, 146.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 163 ff; Thomas O'Gorman, *A History of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States*, New York, Scribner's, 1895, 248.
- <sup>30</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 164.
- <sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, 170; O'Gorman, *op. cit.*, 260.
- <sup>32</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 171.
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 199; Shea, *History of the Catholic Church in the United States*, II, 217.
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 218.
- <sup>35</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 257. Copy in Latin in *Catholic Historical Review*, VI, 224, and also Guilday, *op. cit.*, 222-225.
- <sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 259.
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 257.

### CHAPTER III

#### GENERAL CONDITIONS IN NEW YORK AT THE FOUNDING OF ST. PETER'S

Eight years of civil war could not but leave its mark upon New York. It had entered that war as a colony of England—it emerged as a sovereign State.

The Constitution of 1777, to which we have referred previously, replaced the royal Governor by an elective official, and substituted the Senate for the colonial Council. The Assembly was retained, although its term of office was reduced to one year.<sup>1</sup>

Little change was made in the form of city government. James Duane, with the general approval of the inhabitants, was appointed the first mayor under the new administration by Governor Clinton in 1784.<sup>2</sup>

Property restrictions upon the right to vote were general. It is said that there were fewer voters proportionately in New York City than in the rural districts.<sup>3</sup> Although religious requirements did not exist for the franchise, a test oath effectively barred Catholics from holding an elective position.

At the end of the war, New York was in a serious economic situation. To secure the funds necessary to run the government, paper money was issued on the credit of the State. When this declined extremely in value, heavy taxes were levied on the people; a desperate situation developed until the State finally emerged successfully.

At the outset of the war, New York was, on the whole, fairly prosperous and self-sufficient. War, however, depleted its resources and with the enemy in control of the city throughout the period, food supplies declined and prices increased enormously.<sup>4</sup>

The Revolution wrought transformation in economic classes. Creditors, whose wealth was invested in business, commerce, and mortgages, were wiped out as a result of the depreciated currency, whereas debtors met their obligations in a cheaper standard of

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value. This readjustment tended to place more power in the hands of the poorer class. Overwhelmed in debt, and with its trade destroyed, New York showed no indications of economic improvement during that critical period.<sup>5</sup>

Socially, the condition of New York upon the evacuation of the British was one of turmoil and confusion. The population of the city had consisted of British, "neutrals," and Loyalists from other States who were living under British protection. In August of 1783, at the height of the British occupation, it was estimated that there were 33,000 in the city.<sup>6</sup> One historian graphically pictures the whole summer of 1783 as one vast moving-day.<sup>7</sup> When evacuation was completed, the population of the city was reduced to 10,000, cosmopolitan as ever, but chiefly English and Dutch. Through immigration from New England, and a mild immigration from abroad, mostly Irish, the city, by 1786, numbered 24,000 out of a total state population of 200,000.<sup>8</sup>

With the end of British rule in New York, many wealthy landlords either left or were exiled from the State. Their lands were confiscated, and divided for sale into small farms. Thus, the aristocracy of the State was greatly reduced.

In the manners and mode of living of the people, less pomp and formality were noticeable after 1783. Because of the greater poverty and the difficulty of reaching European markets, dress was marked by a greater use of homespun rather than stylish garments imported from abroad.

In education, little progress was made in the decade of the 'eighties. There were no public schools. Such schools as existed were managed either by private individuals or by churches. Higher education, on the other hand, received an impetus in 1784 by the rechartering of King's College as Columbia College and the creation of the University of the State of New York, with the Board of Regents as its governing body, to superintend all higher education.<sup>9</sup>

Much of the reading of the post-war period was of a practical kind, with emphasis particularly upon politics and government.<sup>10</sup> New York City had its quota of newspapers, at least fourteen being printed in New York in 1783. Many of these were Tory

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sheets that did not outlast the war, but among the most influential were the *New York Packet*, the *Daily Advertiser*, and the *New York Journal* (1784-93).<sup>11</sup>

Religious and moral conditions in New York at the close of the Revolution indicated a state of social ferment.

Throughout the war, the Anglican clergy, as a rule, sided with the British. In fact, according to a report of Doctor Inglis, in 1776, all the Episcopal clergy were loyal to England and were responsible for preventing thousands from joining in the rebellion.<sup>12</sup> That they paid dearly for their allegiance to the Crown is evident from the report. They were threatened, treated with brutal violence, and some were pulled from the reading desk because they prayed for the King.<sup>13</sup> Doctor Inglis found it necessary, finally, to "shut up the churches." He, among others, was forced from the city until its occupation by the royal forces under Howe.<sup>14</sup>

Just as the majority of Anglicans were Loyalists, so most of the Calvinists were Republicans. In New York, a contemporary Loyalist historian dubbed the patriots the "Presbyterian faction."<sup>15</sup> The majority of Congregationalists, German and Dutch Reformed, and also Baptists sympathized with the Americans.

If the Anglicans had suffered prior to the fall of the city, so the majority of other Protestant sects, particularly the Presbyterians, were treated harshly during the British occupation. Dissenting churches served as barracks, hospitals, prisons, and stables.

According to one correspondent in 1783, all the churches, except the Episcopal, Moravian, and Methodist, appeared in a very loathsome condition, with fences destroyed, pews and galleries pulled down and windows broken. "And the respect which ought to be shown to places of divine worship, should prompt [General Carleton] to have them swept, washed and cleaned, and the abominable filth removed out of the churches and church-yards."<sup>16</sup> Vindictiveness alone does not explain such action, since there was a real need of quarters for the increased population.<sup>17</sup> This was all the more true in view of the disastrous consequences of a fire in 1776, which destroyed almost the whole western part



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of the city from Whitehall Slip to Barclay Street, during the course of which Trinity Church, the Lutheran Chapel, and five hundred residences—one quarter of all the residences in the city—were destroyed.<sup>18</sup>

Now, as to the status of Catholics in New York during the Revolution. Except for the temporary increase of Catholics in New York made by the movements of the American Army and the presence of numbers of French military, it may be said that there were hardly any Catholics. Certainly, of no sufficient number to be spoken of as "the Catholics."<sup>19</sup>

Shea, however, tells of a little Catholic congregation in New York before the Revolution, tended by Father Farmer.<sup>20</sup>

The Quebec Act, which had granted to French Canadians complete recognition of the Catholic Faith, was particularly obnoxious to the inhabitants of New York. Cries of "No Popery" were heard. In the upper part of the State, Scotch Catholics from Glengarry who had settled in the Mohawk Valley, and who were attended by Father John McKenna, the first Catholic resident priest in New York since Dongan's time, were denounced as Tories, Papists, and friends of British tyranny; in the end, they were forced to withdraw to Canada.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, Catholics suffered oppression by the British and their sympathizers in New York, particularly after the French alliance was effective.

In 1778, a large French ship was taken by the British to New York harbor for condemnation. Among her officers was an Augustinian chaplain, Father de la Motte. Catholics, hearing of the presence of a priest in the city (he had been permitted to go about) requested him to say Mass for them. He was informed of the law forbidding such a service, and so went to the British authorities for permission. The sanction was refused, but la Motte, not understanding English well, misunderstood the reply and celebrated Mass. The priest was at once arrested and kept in jail until exchanged.<sup>22</sup>

What is most interesting is the reaction of a Tory newspaper editor of the time to the sentence. Heartily approving of the action as the way to treat popery "within the King's lines" he

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contrasted the situation in the colonies subject to Congress, where "To speak against Popery, which is the religion of France, would draw as severe persecution . . . as to speak against the Congress itself."<sup>23</sup>

That the Loyalists used the French Alliance as a means of stirring up religious hatred against the American cause is evidenced from the newspaper reading of the day. A choice sample is the following anti-Catholic toast:

The glorious, pious and immortal memory of the great King William, not forgetting the renowned Cromwell, who saved us from Popery, slavery, brass money and wooden shoes.

Cursed be the Archbishops, Bishops, Priest, Deacons and other dignitaries of the Church; cursed also be their congregations; may they go to sea in a high wind, leaky vessel and a lee shore, to ferry them over the river Styx; may the dog Cereberus make a meal of their breeches, and the devil pump down their throat a harrow and every peg draw a pudding and send their carcasses to Elysium empty.<sup>24</sup>

It may be said, then, that not only were Catholics vilified by the Calvinistic Whig, who, at the beginning of the war, ranted against the Quebec Act; but also by the Anglican Loyalist, who saw, in the French Alliance, the danger of America being converted by the sending here of vessels loaded down with "tons of holy water and casks of consecrated oil."<sup>25</sup>

Bennett says that Mass was said in New York as early as 1775 by Father Farmer in a little house in Wall Street, the home of Joseph Idle, who later became sexton of St. Peter's. So secretive were these meetings, that it was necessary to have the windows tightly shuttered to avoid detection.<sup>26</sup> Barbé Marbois, the French minister, in 1784, and Louis Otto, the French Chargé d'Affaires, in 1786, writing to the French government, both state that there was a Catholic chapel in New York which was destroyed by the fire in 1776.<sup>27</sup>

We have already seen that the Constitution of 1777 dis-established State Churches in New York. It remained for the Law of 1784 to permit any religious denomination to organize as a body corporate to manage its own affairs. It is with the passage of this law that the story of St. Peter's begins.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>A. C. Flick, Chairman, Division of Archives and History, *The American Revolution in New York*, Albany, University of the State of New York, 1926, 229.

<sup>2</sup>Mary L. Boothe, *History of the City of New York From its Earliest Settlement to the Present Time*, New York, 1866, 574.

<sup>3</sup>Flick, *op. cit.*, 232.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 240.

<sup>5</sup>E. Wilder Spaulding, *New York in the Critical Period, 1783-1789*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1932, 25.

<sup>6</sup>Oscar Barck, *New York During the War for Independence*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1931, 78.

<sup>7</sup>Wilbur C. Abbott, *New York in the American Revolution*, New York, Scribner's, 1929, 275.

<sup>8</sup>Spaulding, *op. cit.*, 30 f.; Flick, *op. cit.*, 238.

<sup>9</sup>Flick, *op. cit.*, 248.

<sup>10</sup>Spaulding, *op. cit.*, 37.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 39 f.

<sup>12</sup>See letter of Dr. Inglis to Rev. Dr. Hind, Oct. 31, 1776. Hastings, *op. cit.*, VI, 4292; Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 375.

<sup>13</sup>Hastings, *op. cit.*, VI, 4293; Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 375.

<sup>14</sup>Dix, *op. cit.*, I, 389.

<sup>15</sup>Judge Jones, cited by Shepherd Knapp, *A History of the Brick Presbyterian Church*, New York, 1909, 59.

<sup>16</sup>"Papers Relating to the Evacuation of New York, in the Year 1783," *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York*, New York, Hardy, 1870, 787.

<sup>17</sup>Barck, *op. cit.*, 161.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 80 ff.

<sup>19</sup>*Researches*, XX, 111.

<sup>20</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 72. He bases his statement upon tradition as well as a letter of Archbishop Carroll.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 142.

<sup>22</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 180 f; Bayley, *op. cit.*, 48 f.

<sup>23</sup>"Papinian" in *Rivington's Royal Gazette of New York*, July 17, 1779.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, August 4, 1779.

<sup>25</sup>Claude H. Van Tyne, *Loyalists in the American Revolution*, New York, 1902, 154. See Guilday, *op. cit.*, for a good presentation of Catholics in the American Revolution, 73-91. See *Researches*, XXIII, 1-40, for examples of hostility of both Whig and Tory.

<sup>26</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 338. See also, John F. Quirk, "Father Ferdinand Farmer," *Records and Studies*, VI, Part II, 238, who states there is no evidence for believing he entered New York before the Revolution.

<sup>27</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 338.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE EARLY YEARS OF ST. PETER'S

Reference has already been made to the tradition that Father Farmer celebrated Mass in New York City during the Revolution in Wall Street in the house of Joseph Idley. After the evacuation of the city by the British, Father Farmer openly entered New York and began the work of gathering together a congregation. He ministered to them only occasionally, since his missionary activities extended over three States.

This venerable pioneer of Catholicism in the great metropolis, whose real name was Ferdinand Steinmeyer, was a German, born at Weissenstein in Wuerttemberg, in 1720.<sup>1</sup> Entering the Society of Jesus in 1743, he was assigned to or joined the English Province about 1750. In the following year or two, he arrived in America, and was appointed to a mission in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. From this station, he was transferred, in 1758, to Philadelphia. This change was to mark the beginning of thirty years of zealous, active, missionary labors throughout the territory of southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and southern New York.

An apostle of the Faith in New York, Father Farmer was a man of rare intellectual gifts and personal sanctity. A member of the American Philosophical Society,<sup>2</sup> that association owes to the correspondence of Father Farmer with Father Meyers, astronomer to the Duke of Bavaria, "some curious pieces of that celebrated mathematician on the transit of Venus."<sup>3</sup> He was a member of the Royal Society of London,<sup>4</sup> and at the reorganization of the University of Pennsylvania in 1779, Father Farmer became a trustee, under the provision of the law that trustees should consist, among others, of the senior pastors of the six principal denominations in Philadelphia.<sup>5</sup>

In times when conveniences in transportation were few, Father Farmer spent wearisome days on foot and on horseback to reach scattered groups of Catholics within his wide mission field.

The Catholics of New York were, as yet, without a church,



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so Father Farmer said Mass occasionally wherever accommodations could be secured. It is tradition that Mass was celebrated in 1781-1782 in a loft over a carpenter's shop in Barclay Street—which was then in the far end of the city.<sup>6</sup> Father Farmer did say Mass in a house on Water Street and in the Vauxhall Gardens in 1784.<sup>7</sup> The following year, an Italian traveller reported that the Holy Sacrifice was celebrated in a little room, hardly becoming the ceremony, and that although plans were being made to erect a church, the congregation was neither numerous nor rich, yet all willingly contributed to the praiseworthy enterprise.<sup>8</sup>

At that time, the City of New York was the temporary capital of the nation and the residence of foreign ministers accredited to the United States. Several of these ministers, as well as some members of Congress, were Catholics. This gave encouragement to the small group of Catholics then in the city who sometimes attended services in the parlor of the Spanish consul, Don Thomas Stoughton,<sup>9</sup> and in the house of Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish Ambassador.<sup>10</sup> M. Barbé Marbois, afterwards Marquis de Marbois, the French Chargé d'Affaires, wrote in 1785 that "the establishment of the Legation chapel at New York will give Catholics of that city all the spiritual aid that they can desire."<sup>11</sup> The chaplain of the French legation was Father Seraphin Bandol who remained in New York after the departure of Marbois, as chaplain of the Spanish embassy.<sup>12</sup> This was but a temporary arrangement, since Gardoqui, applying to the King of Spain for a chaplain and chapel, received, in May of 1786, the service of the Dominican Father John O'Connell, who also secured the necessary faculties to minister to Catholics in New York.<sup>13</sup>

Father Farmer maintained an active interest in the little congregation which he was instrumental in establishing, and visited it from time to time until his death in 1786. His last visit to New York was begun in April, 1785. His health was in such poor condition that an associate of his wrote: "He is no more fit to take that journey than I am to fast for forty days and nights like St. Stylitis, without eating and drinking."<sup>14</sup> On May 7, he reached Philadelphia, and, nine days later wrote to Father

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Carroll saying "such is my weakness of late that the exercise and application, both of body and mind, must be short and interrupted."<sup>15</sup> He died on August 17, 1786 and was buried in old St. Joseph's, Philadelphia.<sup>16</sup>

The first resident pastor of the Catholics in New York was an Irish Capuchin, the Reverend Charles Whelan. Born in Ireland in 1741, he joined the Irish Province of that Order, taking the name of Friar Maurice. Because of the Irish penal laws, the headquarters of the Irish Capuchins was located in France; and there Father Whelan remained until 1780, when, upon the request of the French government for chaplains to be assigned to the navy, he was sent to the ship *Jason* in the fleet of Count de Terney. This fleet arrived at Newport in July of 1780 and a year later joined the fleet of De Grasse in the Chesapeake. Subsequent to the victory at Yorktown, De Grasse was defeated by Admiral Rodney in the West Indies. Whelan, a prisoner of war, was brought to Jamaica along with seven thousand Frenchmen, of which number fifteen hundred had been wounded and sick. There were with Whelan six other chaplains, four French and two Spanish, who, taking advantage of their status as prisoners of war, exempted themselves from the obligation of attending the wounded. Deeming it contrary to the spirit of Christianity to abandon so many afflicted persons, Father Whelan took full charge of the work. Because of the great number of sick, five prisons had to be turned into hospitals. He ministered the Sacraments, as he tells us, to 3,562 Frenchmen, 800 Spaniards, and 35 Americans during the thirteen months that he stayed on the Island.<sup>17</sup>

After being paroled, he may have returned to Ireland to bring his two brothers to this country;<sup>18</sup> at any rate, he arrived in New York in October, 1784. Father Whelan describes vividly the state of Catholicism in New York at the time of his arrival:

But passing through the province of New York, where freedom to practice our religion publicly without restriction is allowed, where heretofore a priest who celebrated Mass and administered any Sacrament would have incurred the death penalty; hence, there are many here married, without having received baptism, or any instruction when joining our

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religion. The Catholics here are very poor, but very zealous, being for the most part Irish. They are not able to build a chapel, nor even to buy a place for saying Mass, only a Portuguese gentleman has allowed us a part of his house for that purpose. I hope that Providence will provide another place for us before next May, as this gentleman cannot after that oblige us. But I have confidence that the Lord will not fail us in our need, since poverty is not a crime in His eyes. Nor do I deem it a fault, as money is not the object of my labour, but only the glory of God and the salvation of souls.<sup>19</sup>

The Portuguese gentleman referred to was José Roiz Silva, a Catholic merchant of New York who was later to play a prominent part in the organization of the first church.<sup>20</sup>

Shortly after Whelan's arrival in the city, Father Carroll, the Prefect Apostolic, received a communication from Father Farmer, who was acting as his vicar general. It contained the following references to Father Whelan:

A Capuchin friar arrived a few weeks ago in New York. The congregation has received him for a time and allows him, consequently, a sustenance. I warned some of the principal members of not trusting themselves to him without your approbation. He has a variety of very good credentials, which I have inspected. I found no fault but his too great presumption to act as if he had legal [i. e. juridic] powers. I checked him for it. He had no other but the lame excuse that your reverence had not yet received your powers. . . . If in your discretion your reverence thinks proper to give Mr. Whelan faculties for a time . . . , please to let me know it as soon as convenient.<sup>21</sup>

This is the first example of the difficulty caused by the "cramping clause" in Carroll's appointment, by which he was to give faculties to no priests coming to this country except those sent and approved by the Congregation of the Propaganda.<sup>22</sup> Father Farmer, realizing the predicament of Whelan in New York, advised him to write to the Nuncio at Paris to procure approbation from the Sacred Congregation.<sup>23</sup> Father Whelan accordingly wrote to that official, parts of which letter are cited above. He concluded his request with a testimony of the value to the



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congregation of one who was to have great influence in the organizing of the church:

The French consul, Mr. St. John, is a very staunch friend to religion and furthers our cause as much as possible. He introduced me to the Marquis de la Fayette, and affectionately recommended me to the Governor and magistrates, and also procured for me their protection. His Excellency Mr. de Marboys has arrived here, which will be a very great advantage to our cause. . . . I have converted to the Faith (by God's help) a great number of every class since I first came to these parts. I was surprised to find how easy it was to convert the inhabitants of this country. . . .

It is necessary for a priest in this place to know at least Irish, English, French and Dutch, since our congregation is composed of people of these nationalities as also of Portuguese and Spaniards. I entrust the whole matter to the profound judgment of Your Eminence and hope that your condescension and your reply may enable me to fulfill the duties of my state with more alacrity. . . .<sup>24</sup>

The number of Catholics in New York City at this time was two hundred,<sup>25</sup> although the actual communicants were about twenty.<sup>26</sup> Since this small group received the ministrations of Father Farmer only occasionally, and since Father Whelan as yet had not received permission to administer the Sacrament of Penance, Catholics of the city were still suffering under a spiritual disadvantage. In this situation, Father Whelan made the mistake of hearing two Confessions, as we note from a letter of Father Farmer to Carroll:

I have learned since, from a friend of mine in New York, that some of the people there are scandalized at the gentleman's taking upon him to hear Confessions, as I, when there, had told them that he had no powers. He did so, when I was there, that is, he heard the Confession of a couple he was to marry. I gently checked him for it, for fear of making him think I slighted him on account of his order. But I see now, I should not have spared him; for an absolution that is null could not have put the couple in the state of grace. I intend, as soon as I get leisure, to write to him, to endeavor to draw him out of his ignorance and presumption.<sup>27</sup>



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A subsequent letter of Father Farmer to the Prefect Apostolic contained the further complaint that not only had he heard Confessions but that he had said two Masses every Sunday, and presumably, also on holy days.<sup>28</sup>

Father Farmer visited the New York congregation in April of that year; and upon his return to Philadelphia, wrote Carroll a detailed account of Whelan's actions. He attributed his conduct to his ignorance of canon law and to Whelan's belief that usages in Ireland could govern his procedure here. That his conduct was not a defiance of ecclesiastical authority is evident from the testimony of Farmer who wrote:

His answers are always submissive, and I believe his behavior too; for after I wrote to him he had no faculty to say two masses, he ceased directly. I suppose what made him before take that liberty was the common practice of Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland, where, as I am informed, every priest says two masses on Sunday.<sup>29</sup>

An idea of the difficulties that both Father Whelan and New York Catholics were laboring under at the time follows:

A number of his countrymen, my old acquaintances, and others do not like him; he is not very prudent, nor eloquent when speaking in public, nor has he the gift of ingratiating himself. Whilst in New York, I several times exhorted him to make himself beloved of the people. He is now going about begging subscriptions (for building a chapel) among Protestants. He is fit for that purpose, and gets numbers of subscriptions. But in choosing the ground for it, he did not consult the abler part of his congregation, but suffers himself to be swayed by a Portuguese gentleman, a great benefactor of his. The congregation seems to me to be yet in a poor situation and under many difficulties. He had since getting faculties only twenty odd communicants, and I had eighteen, three of whom were Germans. When I left New York they were entirely out of place for keeping church, which may partly be ascribed to his want of his taking notice of his countrymen, and of his adhering to the opinion of the Portuguese gentleman . . . I am sorry I gave Mr. Whelan the advice to write to the Nuncio, at Paris; for he even sent my own letter to him along with his papers. He is much backed and swayed by the French consul in New York. . . . Scarce was I arrived there, when an Irish merchant paid me a visit,

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and asked me if Mr. Whelan was settled over them. My answer, as far as I can remember, was, he had only power to perform parochial duties; but if the congregation did not like him, and could better themselves, they were not obliged to keep him. Some days after, another, seeing Mr. Whelan's endeavours to settle himself there, as it were, in spite of them, declared to me, he had a mind to apply to the legislature for a law, that no clergyman should be forced upon them: which he thought he could easily obtain. I endeavoured to reconcile them, by telling Mr. Whelan to make himself agreeable to his countrymen, and by telling these, to be contented with what they have at present, for fear of worse.<sup>30</sup>

Before this letter was written, however, Father Carroll had granted faculties to Whelan, on April 16, 1785. Futhermore, Whelan's application to the Propaganda, which had been forwarded to the Nuncio at Paris, had received favorable consideration, and on June 4, 1785, Cardinal Antonelli wrote Carroll, empowering him to grant the necessary faculties to the Capuchin. At the same time Antonelli informed De Crèvecoeur, who had recommended Whelan to the Nuncio, that Carroll was so authorized.<sup>31</sup>

Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur may be considered as the leader and spokesman of the congregation. Thus far, no church had been established, and no legal organization had been effected. On February 3, 1785, twenty-two Catholics appealed to him, on behalf of their brethren, for his assistance in securing a site for the location of their church:

Most honorable Mr. St. John

We the undersigned Catholics, in the name of all our brothers of this city, praying humbly that Mr. St. John, Consul of His Most Christian Majesty for the States of New York, New Jersey and of Connecticut, to try to obtain from the corporation of this city a suitable site on which we can construct a church, being in this encouraged by the happy tolerance accorded by the new constitution of this State and the privilege of professing publicly our religion here.

Your good efforts to obtain the object of our request, as well as the repeated evidence of your zeal in all occasions, which have contributed to the advancement of our religion, attach us to you by the ties of an eternal obligation, and

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prompt from us sentiments of gratitude with which we are, honorable sir, your very h. and very obedient servants:

Dennis McReady, William Byron, Peter Leyme, Gilbert Burke, Michael Burk, M.D., Daniel Kulme, Cornelius Buchanan, Thomas Houghton, James Stewart, José Roiz Sylva, Andrew Burke, Henry Duffin, James Keary, James Lumasny, James Duffy, John Duffy, John Robertson, William Manne, John Francis Le Vacher, William Finney, Andrew Morris, John Sullivan.<sup>32</sup>

De Crèvecoeur acted upon the invitation and presented a request on behalf of the Catholics, to the Common Council on March 4, 1785:

To the honorable Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council of the City of New York:

Humble Petition of the Roman Catholic Inhabitants of the Said City.

Showing that the privilege of adoring God publicly following their consciences, accorded to all Christian sects by the truly Christian and tolerant spirit of the new constitution, has inspired them with the most lively gratitude, and has become a new tie which shall attach them for ever, as well as their descendants, to the prosperity of this State, of which they have the happiness to be citizens.

That at present finding themselves unable to acquire a befitting site, on which they might construct a Church, they are in the necessity of addressing themselves to the honorable corporation, praying it to take their request into consideration and of leasing or enfeoffing to the above named Roman Catholics: some suitable place on which this summer they can establish the foundations of a decent edifice to adore God there according to their consciences.

Signed in favor of the congregation of Roman Catholics.

ST. JOHN, CONSUL DE FRANCE.<sup>33</sup>

Upon the receipt of this communication from the French Consul he received a reply from the Corporation of Trinity Church, made by request of the mayor.<sup>34</sup>

He was informed that three lots, numbers 85, 86, and 87 of the Farm of Trinity Church, each of which was twenty-five by one hundred feet, forming the corner of two streets, Church and Barclay, had been leased to several parties for a period of sixty-three



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years, and that the Corporation of Trinity Church would permit the leaseholders of the lots to transfer them to such person or persons as they judged proper.<sup>35</sup>

Although the selection of a site had to be made shortly, the pressing need was for a temporary place in which to hold services. De Crèvecoeur requested the Common Council for permission to use the old Exchange building on Broad Street, at that time unoccupied. On April 30, 1785, however, at a meeting of that body, at which Mayor Duane was present, the following disposition of the request was made:

On reading a Letter from Mr. St. John, Consul of his Most Christian Majesty the King of France & Navarre requesting that the Roman Catholicks of this city may be indulged with the liberty of meeting in the Exchange until their church can be finished Ordered that the Consul be informed that the Exchange in the Course of the War has been injured and is rendered incapable of sustaining any great Weight as was lately experienced by the Assembly who conceived themselves in so much Danger in two Instances when a [267] concourse of People were collected that they removed to other Places for security That information of these Facts will probably render the Exchange ineligible to the Roman Catholick Assembly as a Place of public Worship And that Mr. Mayor be requested to represent the same to his most Christian Majesty's Consul.<sup>36</sup>

That the town fathers may have been over-solicitous for the safety of their Catholic fellow citizens may be judged from the fact that during the year previous to the application, the building was used as a "School for the instruction of youth in the military Exercise"<sup>37</sup> and that in the years following the refusal it was used as a polling place and also a meeting hall for both the Law Society and the Tammany Society.<sup>38</sup>

The refusal spurred the leaders of the congregation to action. On June 4, 1785, the congregation notified De Crèvecoeur of his election as a trustee of the "Roman Catholic Church in the City of New York." The information was imparted in a joint announcement sent on behalf of the congregation by the other three trustees elected at the same time—José Roiz Silva, James Stewart, and Henry Duffin. The notification cited the zeal and good in-



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tentions that De Crèvecoeur had manifested in their first difficulties. It reported the favorable news that, thanks to the charitable spirit of the citizenry, including members of all sects, seven thousand *livres tournvis* had been collected towards the construction of a Church. Furthermore, it authorized De Crèvecoeur, to solicit subscriptions for the enterprise among Frenchmen of the Kingdom.<sup>39</sup>

It is noteworthy that the first Catholic Church in New York owes its origin largely to the energy and spirit of Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur. This is all the more surprising when one realizes that the author of "The Letters of an American Farmer" was not a particularly strong Catholic, if one at all. A benevolent and generous humanitarian, devoid of petty ambition and local prejudice, however, he was probably a Deist of the Jeffersonian model. His "Letters" were dedicated to the skeptical Abbé Raynal. If his work may be taken as an indication of his ideas on religion, he was indifferent to distinctions of sect and forms of worship, so characteristic of contemporary French rationalistic thought.

Mention has been made of the action of New York State in granting, on April 16, 1784, the right of church organizations to incorporate. Recalling colonial conditions, under which charters of incorporation were illiberally granted, and which accordingly prevented well-disposed persons from supporting religion because of the lack of legal persons entitled to manage donations, it provided that male persons of full age belonging to a church could meet and elect from three to nine trustees to administer the property of said church. The lay trustees were to

. . . have, hold, use, exercise and enjoy, all and singular the Churches, Meeting-Houses, Parsonages . . . thereunto belonging, with the Hereditaments and Appurtenances heretofore by the said Church, Congregation or Society held, occupied or enjoyed . . . to the sole and only proper Use and Benefit of them the said Trustees and their Successors for ever, in as full, firm and ample a Manner in the Law, as if the said Trustees had been legally incorporated.<sup>40</sup>

Trustees were given the sole disposition and ordering of all payments of money belonging to the church as well as the regulation of renting pews. They were not, however, to exercise any authority whatsoever "to fix or ascertain the Salary . . . to be paid

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to the Minister . . . and . . . nothing herein contained, shall be construed . . . to alter or change the Religious Constitutions or Governments . . . [of said church] so far as respects or in any wise concerns the Doctrine, Discipline or Worship thereof."<sup>41</sup>

It was under this statute that the small group of Catholics in New York incorporated on June 10, 1785. De Crèvecoeur, having accepted the leadership, and the three previously named wardens became "The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of New York."

An appeal was accordingly made to "all well disposed Christians of the City of New York" wherein the Catholics related their happiness and gratitude for the passage of the law of 1784. They announced the purchase of the unexpired term of the leases for sixty-three years on the lots of the Trinity Church Farm, and requested the assistance of all citizens who were inclined to help towards the construction of a church on the above site. The subscription list was headed by the names of not only the four trustees but also those of Van Berkell, the Dutch Ambassador, Governor George Clinton, and Mayor Duane.<sup>42</sup>

The response was undoubtedly encouraging, since the trustees then presented a petition to the Corporation of Trinity Church that "they might be permitted to purchase the reversion of certain lots of the Church farm the leases of which they have purchased from the former tenants." On August 17, 1785, Trinity Church Corporation "ordered that it be referred to the Committee appointed to select certain lots of the Church estate for sale."<sup>43</sup>

Trinity Church acted favorably upon the proposal, and on October 7, 1785, "The Committee on leases to whom was referred the Petition of José Roiz Silva and others produced a report thereon ordered that it be entered in the register of files and that the subject matter thereof be confirmed."<sup>44</sup>

Five lots, in all, were secured from Trinity Corporation as a site for the church, and on October 5, 1785 the cornerstone of the first Church of St. Peter was laid.<sup>45</sup> Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister officiated at the ceremony, placing in the cornerstone current specimens of the coinage of King Charles IV.<sup>46</sup>

In response to the wishes of the members of the congregation,

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the church was named for St. Peter, a fitting dedication for that which was to become the mother church of the Archdiocese of New York.

Construction of the edifice did not proceed at once, since sufficient funds had yet to be raised. Meanwhile, appeals had been made for assistance abroad. Dominick Lynch, one of the leaders of the congregation, forwarded a petition of the Board of Trustees to Warden Kirwan of Galway for financial help from the people of that town and county.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, appeals were addressed to the Kings of France and Spain. The latter, responding through his prime minister, the Count of Floridablanca, instructed Gardoqui, to furnish a cash gift of one thousand dollars.<sup>48</sup> This was acknowledged by the Trustees on June 20, 1786, who took the opportunity of thanking Gardoqui for his interest in sponsoring the matter. They expressed their thanks by offering to reserve a pew in a distinguished place for the use of His Majesty's legation. They further requested permission to appoint a priest to solicit Mexico and Cuba for contributions towards the completion of the edifice.<sup>49</sup>

In May of 1786, advertisements appeared in two of the New York newspapers inviting estimates from master carpenters or masons willing to undertake the construction of the building, which were to be submitted to Lynch and Stoughton of 9 Princess Street.<sup>50</sup>

Before the church was built, however, dissension between the congregation and Father Whelan broke out. There is no record of his being present at the laying of the corner stone of the church which he had worked so hard in collecting funds to build. The letters of Father Farmer, quoted above, indicate that Whelan was slightly difficult to get along with. Although well-meaning, he was probably cold, gruff, and tactless; even disliked by his own countrymen and lacking in ability to preach with effect. Born in Ireland, he spoke indifferent English, as he had received his education in France. This impediment was a decided disadvantage in a priest in New York at the time. Surrounded in an atmosphere distinctly foreign to the Church, among Protestants who judged largely the ability of their ministers by the degree of their elo-



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quence, it is not unnatural to find them critical of the shortcomings of Father Whelan.

Into a situation such as this, there arrived in the Fall of 1785, a fellow Capuchin, Andrew Nugent, who belonged to the same province as Father Whelan. He had had much experience in missionary work. Like Father Whelan, he was born in Ireland (1740) and was educated in France. Eleven years the senior of Father Whelan in Religion, he had held important offices of his Order in France and Ireland.<sup>51</sup> Arriving in New York, he was, at first, not permitted to exercise functions, in view of Carroll's limited power. After the latter, however, learned that there was no restriction on his right to grant faculties, Nugent received permission to assist Father Whelan in New York.<sup>52</sup> Then the trouble began. Whelan and Nugent did not get along together. Within a month Nugent had created a factional following among the trustees, as a result of which they demanded that Whelan resign and leave the city.<sup>53</sup>

The difficulty was that Nugent was an eloquent preacher, and Father Whelan was not. The Prefect Apostolic, nevertheless, thought favorably of Whelan, of whom he said:

The Capuchin is a zealous, pious, and, I think, humble man. He is not, indeed, so learned or so good a preacher as I could wish, which mortifies his congregation; as at New York and most other places in America the different sectaries have scarce any other test to judge of a clergyman than his talents for preaching, and our Irish congregations, such as New York, follow the same rule.<sup>54</sup>

By December, the congregation had split into factions. On December 18, "two adherents of Nugent, with his connivance, seized the collection taken up at Mass; and with money as the cause, the first schism in the American Church became a reality."<sup>55</sup>

Both Fathers Farmer and Carroll became acquainted with the situation in New York by the correspondence of Father La Valinière, who had been permitted by Farmer to exercise faculties in the city with respect to the French and Canadians.<sup>56</sup> Although Whelan knew French, "yet has he very much disgusted them [the French] by his imprudence and also by self interestedness."<sup>57</sup>



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Farmer proposed, as a compromise, that Father Whelan perform all the parish functions, and leave the preaching to Father Nugent, at least until Carroll saw fit to act. Furthermore, in a letter to Mr. McReady, one of the trustees supporting Nugent, he insisted upon due submission to ecclesiastical authority.<sup>58</sup> But this plan suited neither party.<sup>59</sup>

Whelan subsequently published from the altar that Father Nugent had no power to give absolution. This set the friends of Nugent in a rage against Whelan. They threatened that there would be no church, if Whelan was to be their parish priest.<sup>60</sup>

The trustees then decided to ignore Father Whelan and consequently compel Father Farmer or the Vicar Apostolic to remove him. They even threatened to use legal means to accomplish this end, assuming that the congregation had a right not only to choose clergymen but to dismiss them at pleasure; and that after such election the bishop or other ecclesiastical superior, could not hinder such an elected clergyman from exercising the usual functions.<sup>61</sup>

Realizing in January the seriousness of the situation, Father Carroll sent three letters to the principals in the schism; one to Father Whelan, one to Nugent, and a third to the Board of Trustees. The first to Nugent on January 17, expressed his distress as to

how fatal these dissensions may prove to that infant congregation, and indeed how generally disadvantageous the impression of them may be through the United States, of which New York by the residence of Congress may be deemed the capitol . . . . I understand that amongst other pretensions, the authors of the present disturbance have alleged, that they have a right to appoint and discharge their chaplain at their pleasure; which if true would render him liable to become the victim of the most capricious despotism. It is certain that the congregation of New York received Mr. Whelan as their chaplain; that they agreed to support him; that even the few who complain of him, have no reproach to make against him, of immorality or inattention to his ministerial functions: but only that his manners are some how displeasing to them. At least, when repeatedly called upon by me, they owned that this and not his preaching to their satisfaction, were the only grounds of exception to him: which if they be reasons sufficient for his discharge, I am afraid that most of us must be involved in

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his sentence . . . . I must do him the justice to say, that he has never represented you as the author or fomentor of these unhappy dissensions, tho' I own he has conceived some distrust, which you have the charity enough to excuse and remove . . . and I rely on your friendship as well as your zeal for the interests of religion, to make my sentiments everywhere known.<sup>62</sup>

In a letter to Whelan, the following day, Father Carroll stated that he had reason to believe that Nugent would not attempt an unlawful exercise of spiritual powers; and that the wild project of nominating him to the parish would die away

and the persons who devised or abetted so inconsistent a measure will soon discover its fatal consequences, not only to the credit, but the very essence and vital spirit of our holy religion. I shall always respect every decent and free representation or complaint of a congregation, or a considerable part of it; but at the same time, I hope God in his goodness will endow me with sufficient fortitude to resist every disorderly and tumultuary attempt to discharge or silence those clergymen who have a lawful mission.<sup>63</sup>

At the same time, he took occasion to urge Whelan to settle his differences with Nugent, and disapproved certain actions of his that had been the source of the trouble.<sup>64</sup>

The following week, he protested strongly to the Trustees for their assumption of authority in the Church

*If ever the principles then laid down should become predominant, the unity and catholicity of our Church would be at an end;* and it would be formed into distinct and independent societies, nearly in the same manner as the congregational Presbyterians of our neighboring New England States. A zealous clergyman performing his duty courageously and without respect of persons would be always liable to be the victim of his earnest endeavours to stop the progress of vice and evil example, and others more complying with the passions of some principal persons of the congregation would be substituted in his room; and if the ecclesiastical superior has no control in these instances, I will refer to your own judgment what the consequence may be. The great source of misconception in this matter is that an idea appears to be taken both by you and Mr. Whelan that the officiating clergyman at New York is a parish priest, whereas there is yet no such office in

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the United States. The hierarchy of our American Church not being yet constituted; no parishes are formed, and the clergy coming to the assistance of the faithful, are but voluntary labourers in the vineyard of Christ, not vested with ordinary jurisdiction annexed to their office, but receiving it as a delegated and extra-hierarchical commission. Wherever parishes are established no doubt, a proper regard (and such as is suitable [?] to our governments) will be had to rights of the congregation in the mode of election and representation; and even now I shall ever pay to their wishes every deference consistent with the general welfare of religion: of which I hope to give you proof in the sequel of this letter, for I could not but fear, that a step so violent, at such a time and place, and probably in the presence of other religionists would breed disunion among yourselves and make a very disadvantageous impression, to the prejudice of our Catholic cause, soon after the first introduction of public worship into your city.<sup>65</sup>

After promising that, when his faculties were amplified, he would appoint Nugent as joint chaplain with Whelan, he then warned the trustees that if they instituted legal action to rid themselves of Whelan, they would be without a pastor, since he would not grant faculties to any priest countenancing such action.

The trustees, however, paid little attention to the warning. In a vote taken about this time as to whether Whelan should be removed, only four of the congregation were in favor of his remaining;<sup>66</sup> and since Christmas, he had been without support.

Worn down by the opposition, Whelan wrote Father Farmer signifying his willingness to quit New York if he could be provided with another place.<sup>67</sup> Before waiting for an answer, he left New York to join his brother at a farm forty-five miles above Albany, on February 12, with the intention of returning for Easter week.<sup>68</sup>

In this embarrassing situation, Father Farmer gave temporary parochial powers, without restriction to the French, to Father La Valinière. What caused the greatest difficulty in giving faculties to Nugent, as Father Farmer relates, was

the arbitrary and ungenerous manner with which they forced poor Father Whelan to depart, who, though he was not very learned, yet was ready to ask and take advice, which, I believe, is not the quality of the former [Nugent]. The second



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is, they who take upon them to be the trustees (at least some of them) have the principle, that they can choose for themselves whom they please, whether approved by the superior or not, as I formerly heard they said, and as now the fact proves. This principle is of the most pernicious consequences, and must be contradicted.<sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile, the Prefect Apostolic, realizing the situation of New York Catholics, and seeing no alternative, was compelled by circumstances to appoint Father Nugent temporary pastor of St. Peter's, his faculties being limited expressly *usque ad revocationem*.<sup>70</sup> He was empowered to preach, administer the Sacraments of Baptism and Matrimony, and the rest, whenever it was necessary.<sup>71</sup>

For some months things went smoothly at St. Peter's except for a quarrel between Nugent and the trustees as to his salary. They offered him three hundred dollars a year, the Sunday collections included; he demanded four hundred. Thereupon, the trustees told him that "he had liberty to depart and welcome."<sup>72</sup>

Throughout this period of dissension and strife, the members of the congregation continued their efforts to complete the church. "Like the Israelites of old, they seem to have been able to work with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other."<sup>72a</sup> By means of doubling the work of construction, it was possible to dedicate the church, although not completely finished, in the Fall of that year.

Great was the joy of the New York Catholics, when, amidst a brilliant assemblage, the church was opened on November 4, 1786. Because of the generous benefaction of King Charles III of Spain, in granting the church one thousand dollars, the trustees decided to have the first Mass celebrated on the Feast of St. Charles Borromeo, the "Saint's Day" of His Majesty and of the Prince of Asturias. They invited His Excellency, the Chargé d'Affaires, Don Diego de Gardoqui' and his family to be present at the ceremony.<sup>73</sup>

Solemn High Mass was celebrated by Father Nugent, assisted by the chaplains of the French and Spanish legations. Gardoqui was assigned a place of distinction, which was to be reserved in



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the future for the ministers of His Catholic Majesty in the city. After the Mass, Father Nugent preached a sermon in which he reminded the congregation of their obligation of giving thanks to the Almighty and of praying for the health and happiness of the Catholic King and Royal Family.

The ceremony over, Gardoqui celebrated the memorable day by giving a splendid banquet "in honor of the President, the members and secretaries of the Congress, the Governor of the State, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of War, of Domestic Affairs, the Ministers and Foreign Consuls, and other persons of distinction." After a series of toasts, including those to the Royal House and to the United States of America, "the guests showed the greatest satisfaction and joy and all ended with the best cheer."<sup>74</sup>

Unfortunately, Father Carroll could not attend the ceremony, having received the invitation too late to make the journey; and fearing that his absence would be misinterpreted, he wrote Gardoqui explaining his inability to be present and expressing his personal regard for the latter.<sup>75</sup>

The happiness generated by the great event did not last long. Although Carroll reported that religious affairs in New York were prospering in July 1787,<sup>76</sup> controversy again broke out between the trustees and Father Nugent. They, who had been instrumental in replacing Father Whelan with their favorite, now drew up such a serious list of charges against Nugent that Father Carroll felt compelled to visit the city for an investigation.

After this was completed, Carroll removed entirely the approval and the faculties previously granted to the Capuchin, because in the course of the investigation, he found that Nugent had been previously suspended by the Archbishop of Dublin.<sup>77</sup> He then appointed as pastor a Father William O'Brien, O.P., who had spent sixteen years in the Archdiocese of Dublin. Father Nugent refused to withdraw, telling Carroll that he would not permit the Dominican to celebrate Mass on his altar. Then followed an unfortunate occurrence.

Father Carroll, preparing to celebrate Mass on the following Sunday before a crowded congregation, composed of many of other faiths, was interrupted by Nugent who claimed the right to say

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the parish Mass. He declared that he would not yield, unless Carroll promised not to make mention of him in his sermon. This Carroll refused to concede, asserting his right to inform the congregation as to whom they should avoid and whom they should resort to in spiritual need.

A violent tumult ensued during the course of which some partisans of Nugent even claimed that Carroll's authority, arising from the Apostolic See, was foreign, and so, contrary to law.<sup>78</sup> Carroll consequently suspended Nugent and cautioned the congregation from being present at any Mass he might celebrate. Whereupon, Carroll proceeded with the more sensible part of the faithful to the private chapel of Gardoqui.

Father Nugent, nevertheless, said Mass, supported by a few adherents, blind or ignorant of ecclesiastical authority. Rumors were then spread throughout the city by the Nugent faction that Carroll had no authority save that of a simple priest, except the faculty of administering Confirmation, and that the laws of New York prohibited all foreign jurisdiction whether civil or ecclesiastic.

In order to combat this erroneous view, Carroll published an address to the Catholics of New York, signed by the principal Catholics of the city, in which he explained the nature of his spiritual authority and of church discipline.

And how did they [your forefathers] obtain this great effect? Was it by intruding themselves into the sanctuary? Did they, did you before you crossed over into this country, assume to yourselves the rights of your first pastors? Did you name those clergymen who were charged with the immediate care of your souls? Did you invest them with their authority? Did you confer on them those powers, without which their ministry must be of no avail? No, dear Christians; neither your forefathers nor you assumed to yourselves those prerogatives: you never plunged that fatal dagger into the vitals of true religion.<sup>79</sup>

The trustees, accepting the validity of Carroll's authority, placed a new lock upon the church to keep Nugent out. On the next Sunday, however, Nugent and certain members of his party took possession of the church, and Carroll said Mass for the second time in the Spanish chapel.

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Carroll, amidst this confusion, quit New York and shortly thereafter the trustees instituted legal proceedings against Nugent. Fortunately the law of 1784 had included a provision that nothing contained in the law was intended to make any change whatsoever in the religious constitution or government of any church, congregation, or society, in so far as it related to their doctrine, discipline, and worship. Nugent, in one of his extravagant utterances, acknowledged neither the Pope nor any other superior except Christ and the magistrates of New York.<sup>80</sup>

The legal action thus instituted by the trustees caused the removal of Nugent, who, nevertheless, hired a house and continued to celebrate Mass sacrilegiously.<sup>81</sup>

The unfortunate priest did not remain long in this country. On January 4, 1790, at a meeting of the trustees of St. Peter's

Mr. Morris represented that Mr. George Shea had made application to him, and other members Trustees for raising a sum of money for the sole purpose of defraying the expences of the passage of the Rev. Mr. Andrew Nugent to France in the Packet *Le Telemaque* now in this Port and advertised to sail this day.

Whereupon the following was read and adopted.

We the subscribers actuated by pure motives of Benevolence towards the Revd. Mr. Andrew Nugent whose present distressed situation being represented to us by Mr. George Shea, we have thought proper to subscribe and pay the following sums to be solely appropriated [sic] for discharging the expences [sic] of his passage, and other incidental charges attending his Voyage to France in the Packet *Le Telemaque*.

Seventeen pounds were raised among eight of the trustess, the list being headed by the name of Dominick Lynch.<sup>82</sup>

When Nugent arrived in France he was without a home. The monastery of his Order at Vassy was among the many that had been suppressed during the French Revolution. He then applied to the Government for a pension. Whether he received it or not is unknown. He died in France on September 8, 1795, aged fifty-five years.<sup>83</sup>

Reviewing the history of the early years of St. Peter's it may be seen that the church in New York was born amidst strife and con-



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fusion. Before the congregation was even in possession of a church that could be called their own, and dependent largely upon the charitable help of the well-disposed, the insidious evil of trusteeism, had already taken root.

Deprived of priest or bishop the Catholics of New York organized the first congregation, independently of ecclesiastical sanction. They had laid the corner stone of what was to be the first church without the formalities prescribed for such a ceremony by the Roman ritual. They had elected as their agents "The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of New York." Zealous and impatient in their endeavors to enjoy the benefits of their religion, they displayed a commendable spirit of initiative in organizing and procuring the site of a church. Yet they paid insufficient attention to the claims of ecclesiastical authority.

This small Catholic congregation was composed of Irish, French, Dutch, German, Portuguese and Spanish. Many of these immigrants may have been infected, as a result of conditions in Europe, with errors concerning Faith and Church discipline. "Febronianism was then rampant in Germany; Gallicanism had not yet received its deathblow in France: both were in favor of lessening the power of the Church and ecclesiastical authorities, and placing more power in the hands of the laity."<sup>84</sup>

To this factor of European influences that may have had an effect upon determining the extent of lay influence in the early history of the Church in New York, there must be added the natural reaction consequent upon the War of Independence for complete liberty and freedom in the control of civil affairs. It was not difficult to transfer this notion beyond its proper channel into the realm of church discipline and organization. This may explain the tolerance of sectarian notions of church organization particularly by those lovers of the spirit of American independence—the Irish.

Furthermore, one must consider the dominant religious environment in which St. Peter's congregation was located. Surrounded by non-Catholic neighbors and friends, whose sectarian notions of church organization and discipline granted almost complete power to the laity, it is not surprising that the first Catholics of New York should have absorbed a part of that tradition.



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It was, however, from these inauspicious beginnings that the Church of St. Peter developed until today its daughter churches are scattered everywhere throughout the bounds of the State of New York and part of New Jersey.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lambert Schrott, *Pioneer German Catholics in the American Colonies, 1734-1784*, Monograph Series XIII, The United States Catholic Historical Society, New York, 1933, 57.

<sup>2</sup>The *United States Catholic Magazine*, Baltimore, Murphy (1842-1848), IV, 256.

<sup>3</sup>Quirk, *loc. cit.*, 241 f.

<sup>4</sup>Schrott, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>5</sup>Joseph L. J. Kirlin, *Catholicity in Philadelphia*, Philadelphia, McVey, 1909, 94; cf. American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia, *Records*, Philadelphia (1884-1931) 94.

<sup>6</sup>Bayley *op. cit.*, 53-54; Shea (*The Catholic Churches of New York City*, 587), corroborates this location although he gives no date, but implies it is after 1783.

<sup>7</sup>Their [Catholics] place of worship was a building erected for public purposes in Vauxhall Garden, situated on the margin of the North River, the Garden extending from Warren to Chambers Streets." J. Greenleaf, *History of the Churches of All Denominations in New York* (New York, 1850), 333.

<sup>8</sup>"I Cattolici non avevano ancora fabbricata una Chiesa, e radunavansi la Domenica in una camera poco decente, ma nell' inverno del 1785, avendo comperato un sufficiente spazio di terreno, gettarono i fondamenti d' una bella Chiesa, che cominciassi ad officiare nell' Ottobre del 1786. La Congregazione de' Cattolici non è, nè molto numerosa, nè molto ricca, ma tutti però di buona voglia contribuirono a questa lodevole impresa."

Conte Luigi Castiglioni, *Viaggio negli State Uniti dell' America Settentrionale, fatto negli anni 1785, 1786 e 1787*, Milano, Marelli, 1790, I, 177.

<sup>9</sup>"Mr. Velasquez informs me that Stoughton lived at that time in Water Street, and that Mass was first celebrated in the second story of a small frame-house near his residence. Bayley, *op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>10</sup>He remained in New York for four years, living at the Kennedy mansion, No. 1 Broadway. Bennett, *op. cit.*, 370.

<sup>11</sup>Cited by Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 266.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>14</sup>Letter of Father Molyneux to Carroll, April 23, 1785, *Researches*, XVIII, 95.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>Quirk, *loc. cit.*, 241.

<sup>17</sup>Letter of Whelan to the Nuncio at Paris, January 28, 1785, cited by John M. Lenhart, O.M. Cap., "Contributions to the Life of Reverend Charles Whelan, O. M. Cap. (D. 1806), First Resident Pastor of New York City," *Records*, XXXVII (1926), 245 f.; cf., Guilday, *op. cit.*, 250 ff.

<sup>18</sup>B. V. Campbell, "Memoir of the Life and Times of the Most Reverend John Carroll, First Archbishop of Baltimore," *United States Catholic Magazine*, VI (1847) 103; cf., also Shea, *op. cit.*, 265; and Norbett H. Miller, "Pioneer Capuchin Missionaries in the United States (1784-1816)," *Records and Studies*, XXI, 181.

Father Lenhard (*loc. cit.*, 243), however, thinks this is wrong.

<sup>19</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 182.

<sup>20</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 368. It has been said that Father Whelan came to serve as a private chaplain for him, but the context of the above letter would seem to indicate otherwise. Cf. Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 265; Lenhart, *loc. cit.*, 243.

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<sup>21</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 248 f.

<sup>22</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>23</sup>Letter of Father Farmer to Whelan, January 11, 1785, cited by Guilday, *op. cit.*, 249.

<sup>24</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 185.

<sup>25</sup>According to the letter of Farmer to Carroll, February 21, 1785, which was based upon Whelan's estimate; Miller, *loc. cit.*, 185.

<sup>26</sup>Letter of Farmer to Carroll, May 16, 1785, Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 144.

<sup>27</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 186; Guilday, *op. cit.*, 252 f., although the date of the letter is in error.

<sup>28</sup>Letter of Farmer to Carroll, March 13, 1785. Guilday, *op. cit.*, 253.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 253 ff.; Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 144 f.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 255.

<sup>32</sup>This is the second of a series of documents in French, written by De Crèvecoeur and now located in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Paris. Robert de Crèvecoeur, author of *St. Jean de Crèvecoeur: sa vie et ses ouvrages*, Paris, 1883, transcribed them for J. G. Shea in 1889, which transcription is now in the Georgetown Archives, *Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Consulat du New York, 1783 à 1788*, Georgetown Catalogue No. 30.3.

<sup>33</sup>Document 3, *ibid.*, 2.

<sup>34</sup>Document 4, *ibid.*, 3.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>36</sup>*Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831*, published by the City of New York, 1917, I, 137.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, June 30, 1784.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 247, 318.

<sup>39</sup>Document 8, *Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Consulat du New York, 1783 à 1788*, Shea Transcript, 5 f.

<sup>40</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 53.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>42</sup>Document 9, *Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Consulat du New York, 1783 à 1788*, Shea Transcript, 6 ff.

<sup>43</sup>*Minutes of the Vestry Corporation of Trinity Church, 1697-1791*, I, 477.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 479.

<sup>45</sup>Guilday (*op. cit.*, 256) gives November 4, 1785. This is an error, confused with the date of the saying of the first Mass, November 4, 1786.

<sup>46</sup>*New York Packet*, October 10, 1785; the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, October 12, 1785; Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 280.

<sup>47</sup>September 20, 1785. *Researches* V, 58 ff.

<sup>48</sup>Gardoqui to Floridablanca, June 18, 1786. Shea Transcripts, Georgetown Archives, 38.13; Translation printed in *Catholic Historical Review*, I, 69 f.

<sup>49</sup>Trustees to Gardoqui. June 20, 1786. *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*New York Gazetteer and County Journal*, May 26, 1786; *New York Packet*, May 29, 1786.

<sup>51</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 189.

<sup>52</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>53</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 262.

<sup>54</sup>Letter of Carroll to Plowden, December 15, 1785, Bayley, *op. cit.*, 55 f.

<sup>55</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 263.

<sup>56</sup>Letter of Farmer to Carroll, December 27, 1785, Campell, *loc. cit.*, 145.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>58</sup>Farmer to Carroll, December 20, 1785. *Ibid.*

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<sup>69</sup>Farmer to Carroll, January 29, 1786. *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 276.

<sup>72</sup>Carroll to Nugent, January 17, 1785, Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 30.5.

<sup>73</sup>Carroll to Whelan, January 18, 1785, Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 30.5.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*; printed in Guilday, *op. cit.*, 267; also, *Researches*, XVII, 1-16.

<sup>76</sup>Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 146.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup>Letter of Molyneux to Carroll, containing a postscript by Farmer, February 25, 1786, *Researches*, XXVIII, 277 f.; Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 147.

Whelan subsequently became a pioneer missionary in Kentucky. Arriving there in the Spring of 1787, he located himself at Pottinger's Creek, about ten or fifteen miles from Bardstown. In 1790 he was in Johnstown, New York. In 1799 he became pastor of Coffee Run in Mill Creek Hundred, Delaware. In 1805 he retired to Bohemia Manor with the Jesuits where he died the next year. The following record is found in the Register of Bohemia Manor: "1806, March 21—Died at the Head of Little Bohemia, the Rev. Charles Whelan, of the Order of St. Francis, formerly Chaplain in the French Navy, and lately Rector of White Clay Creek. He was about sixty-five years of age. His remains were buried near to those of Mr. Faure, close to the East end of the Church of Bohemia." Miller, *loc. cit.*, 198 ff.; *Records*, I, 137.

<sup>79</sup>Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 147.

<sup>80</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 282; Farley, *History of St. Patrick's Cathedral*, New York [c. 1908], 12.

<sup>81</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, March 13, 1786. Cited by Guilday, *op. cit.*, 269.

<sup>82</sup>Farmer to Carroll, April 13, 1786. Campbell, *loc. cit.*, 148.

<sup>83</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 192.

<sup>84</sup>Trustees to Gardoqui, October 28, 1786; Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 38.13; translation printed in *Catholic Historical Review*, I, 72 f.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 75; the *New York Packet*, November 7, 1786.

<sup>86</sup>Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 38.13. *Catholic Historical Review*, I, 76 f.; Guilday, *op. cit.*, 276 f.

<sup>87</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 277.

<sup>88</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, March 18, 1788; *Archivo di Propaganda, Scritture riferite, America Centrale*, II, folios 363 r-366 v. Father Carroll does not indicate the specific reason for Nugent's suspension in Ireland, other than by a general phrase, subject to more than one interpretation.

<sup>89</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 279.

<sup>91</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, March 18, 1788, *loc. cit.*

<sup>92</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, April 19, 1788, *loc. cit.*

<sup>93</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church, 1789-1810*, 32.

<sup>94</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 196 f. It is important to know in connection with the Nugent embroglio that all the sources on which our knowledge of Nugent's actions are based, give us the view of Bishop Carroll. There is no available source that might be construed as a defense of Nugent's actions.

<sup>95</sup>Miller, *loc. cit.*, 194.



## CHAPTER V

PASTORATE OF REVEREND WILLIAM V. O'BRIEN, O. P.

(1787-1807)

One happy consequence of the Nugent affair was its effect in urging for the good of the Church the establishment of an American bishopric. Father Carroll had been serving since 1784 as Prefect Apostolic. This was intended only as a temporary arrangement. Although there had been earlier opposition to the appointment of a Bishop, now there was more or less unanimity that an ecclesiastic invested with episcopal power and authority, was essential. A *Memorial* on behalf of the American clergy, drafted by a committee of which John Carroll was a member, petitioned Pope Pius VI for a Bishop (March 12, 1788). In a letter of Father Carroll to Father O'Brien, reference was made to the calling of the clergy for this purpose, at which meeting,

Two other gentlemen were appointed besides myself [Carroll] to transact this business, and they, as it happens to easy people like myself, devolved the whole trouble of framing memorials, petitions etc. on me. Being very unwilling to engage in this last affair, I delayed it till Nugent's misconduct convinced me, it was no longer safe to do so: and a prospect having opened itself of procuring a Bishop, eligible by the officiating clergymen in America instead of being appointed by a foreign tribunal which would shock the political prejudices of this country the Memorial for that purpose is now gone to his Holiness.<sup>1</sup>

In his letter to Antonelli March 18, 1788, in which he gave an account of Nugent's conduct, Carroll said:

When my brother priests, whose training and experience in America is longer, and I were weighing careful this matter and many others, we thought that the time had now come, if indeed it seemed best to the Holy See and the Congregation to appoint a bishop of the Church in America whose authority and name can more forcefully restrain those of petulant nature. It does not escape me, most eminent Cardinal that there will perhaps be those who will suspect that I have said this with a view to base ambition. But I should prefer to subject

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myself to this suspicion or to even graver ones rather than by keeping silent to hide the danger which seems to threaten religion.<sup>2</sup>

Carroll wrote a postscript to this letter, dated April 19, 1788, in which he said:

While I remained in New York last Autumn, I discussed many points, with his Excellency the Spanish Ambassador Gardoqui about the state of religion, and the extension of it throughout these provinces and, in accordance with his unusual wisdom, he stated that the name and the authority of a bishop were most essential, and he voluntarily undertook the transmission of a plea to the feet of His Holiness,—a plea which I am entrusting to his care, and a true copy of which I am enclosing in this letter.<sup>3</sup>

Gardoqui sent a copy of the *Memorial*, together with his own recommendation of the appointment of Carroll, to the Spanish prime minister who in turn sent it to the Vatican.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, upon favorable action by the Congregation of Propaganda, Pope Pius VI, on July 6, 1788, granted the request. The American clergy were permitted to elect a nominee for the episcopal rank, and they chose John Carroll almost unanimously. The choice was confirmed by Propaganda on September 14, 1789. Three days later, the Apostolic Bull announced the creation of John Carroll as the first Bishop of the new See of Baltimore.

For the first eighteen years of Carroll's episcopacy, the Church of New York enjoyed the wise and devoted stewardship of a worthy Dominican, Father William O'Brien.

He was born in Ireland about 1740. Where he received his early education is not certain. He made his profession as a Dominican in Rome (in what was then called the "double Convent" of Saints Sisto and Celemente), about 1761. Father O'Brien remained there as a student and was ordained probably in 1768 or 1769. Returning to Ireland in 1770, he labored in and around Dublin for sixteen or seventeen years. At the request of the provincial chapter of the Province of Ireland, he was made a Preacher General of his Order in 1785, for which reason he is sometimes called the Reverend Doctor O'Brien.<sup>5</sup>

Bringing with him a high recommendation from Archbishop

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Troy of Dublin, Father O'Brien arrived in the United States as a missionary about 1786. After serving in and around Philadelphia for a brief time, Father Carroll appointed him in October 1787, as pastor of St. Peter's Church.

During the twenty years of Father O'Brien's ministry at St. Peter's, the New York congregation enjoyed a period of peace and remarkable growth. He was an intimate friend of Father Carroll, and took a keen interest in his promotion to the miter. Likewise, Father Carroll's letters attest the praise and admiration of the work of Father O'Brien as pastor of St. Peter's.

The earliest extant *Records of St. Peter's Church* begin with the pastorate of Father O'Brien. The first entry, written in an elegant scroll, so characteristic of the period, is as follows:

Monday in Easter Week, New York,

13th April, 1789.

At a general vestry held in St. Peter's Church in the City of New York, on Easter Monday, April 13, 1789 (subsequent to prior notifications published by the minister thereof) for the purpose of electing trustees for the ensuing year, agreeably to a Law of the State passed the 6th day of April 1784, entitled "An Act to Enable all the Religious Denominations in this State to appoint Trustees."

The following gentlemen were unanimously elected to that office, *nem. con.*

Dominick Lynch Esq.  
Mr. George Barnewall,  
Mr. Andrew Morris,  
Mr. John Sullivan,  
Mr. Charles Neylon,  
Mr. William Mooney,  
Mr. Thomas Stoughton,  
Mr. José Roiz Silva, and  
Mr. Patrick Farrell.

The foregoing gentlemen being authorized to act in the office of trustee for the temporalities of said church, from Monday in Easter week, 1789, to Monday in said week, 1790, which office they have respectively accepted of, during the period aforesaid.<sup>6</sup>



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Many of these men had been active leaders in the affairs of the church from the beginning and were to remain active for many years to come.

Dominick Lynch, a man of excellent education, was born in Galway, Ireland, in 1754. After his marriage to Jane Lynch, his cousin, in 1780, he went to live at Bruges, in Flanders, where he opened up a branch of his father's commercial house at Galway. Here he amassed a considerable fortune as a result of this import business, made particularly lucrative by the Revolutionary War. At Bruges, he made the acquaintance of Don Thomas Stoughton, a merchant with Spanish and French commercial connections. With him he entered into a partnership to open a commercial house in America (1783). Mr. Lynch invested £5,000, while Stoughton put half that sum into the business, contingent upon the active management being assumed by him. Accordingly, Stoughton sailed immediately to New York in the spring of 1783, and opened the counting house of Lynch and Stoughton. Mr. Lynch, with his family, including three of his children born at Bruges, came here in 1785.

His arrival occurred during a time of great business depression in New York. Consequently, the event elicited universal interest and satisfaction, since, it is said, he brought a larger amount of specie, in addition to the capital invested in the firm, than had been brought to America by any one individual for many years back.<sup>7</sup> Lynch took up his residence at No. 36 Broadway, next to the house of Don Diego de Gardoqui, the Spanish minister, which adjoined the one in which President Washington lived in 1790.

In 1784 Don Thomas Stoughton was named by the King of Spain as Consul at New York while his father, Don Juan Stoughton, was made consul for the New England States with residence at Boston.<sup>8</sup> This appointment, together with dissatisfaction with Stoughton's management, ultimately led to a dissolution of the firm in 1795, entailing litigation that pended in the chancery courts for more than twenty years.

From the advent of their arrival in New York both men took a zealous interest in the newly organized Catholic congregation.



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When it was decided that the original title of incorporation was too vague, and when the congregation adopted, on April 23, 1787, as its title "The Trustees for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Peter's Church in the City of New York in America," both Lynch and Stoughton were members of the board. Throughout the *Records of St. Peter's Church* are evidences of the live, practical interest which these men displayed. In addition to their generous donations, it was not unusual for them to lend their personal funds for the use of the Board during the period of completing the construction of the church. In 1790, the congregation was indebted to Lynch for the sum of £400 "being so much as he Piously lent them (free of Interest) towards erecting the said church."<sup>9</sup>

The Records indicate that the years immediately subsequent to 1789 were a time of great financial need in the completion of the church edifice. The minutes show that urgent appeals were made in order to save the church from being sold to pay the rent due on the land acquired.

It was in this situation that the trustees were compelled to solicit the financial support of Count de Moustiers, the French minister, St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, Don Salvador de los Monteros, and others. Also, two Memorials were sent in the Spanish language, one to the Bishop of Carthage, and the other to His Catholic Majesty's subjects in South America, representing the deplorable situation and abject state of the finances of St. Peter's.<sup>10</sup>

At a meeting of the Trustees on October 5, 1789

It was moved that the Reverend Mr. William O'Brien the present pastor be requested to undertake a voyage to old Spain in order to solicit donations, and obtain contributions for the present relief and permanent establishment of said church—to which with a generous frankness peculiar to himself he agreed.<sup>11</sup>

At the same meeting it was voted to send a memorial to Don Diego de Gardoqui, on the eve of his departure for Spain. He had not only given countenance and protection to the church during his residence in New York but after an appeal, in 1788, by Father Carroll, on behalf of the New York Catholics,<sup>12</sup>

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Gardoqui had been instrumental in procuring assistance for the support of the Church from South American sources. The memorial read as follows:

Honorable Sir,

Prompted by gratitude as well as inclination, we the Pastor and Trustees of Saint Peter's Church take the liberty thus publicly to address you on your departure from this city—We acknowledge with pleasure Sir, that your conduct in the high station to which your sovereign called you was universally esteemed and that your character in private life excited admiration; so that in justice we must say, that you happily united the Statesman and the Christian, and in your scrupulous assiduity to the service of your Royal Master, you looked up with confidence to God your Maker—By your representing to the Court the distressed state of religion in this Country, we were emboldened by the Royal bounty to erect a church, the corner Stone of which you cheerfully laid in his Majesty's name—

At a time when the liberties of our church were grossly infringed and her sacred authority insulted, you, sir, came forward the champion of her violated rights, and afforded a generous asylum to the Pastor and his scattered flock in his Majesties house. Your religious attention to the Church and her Divine Service, makes you, sir, no stranger to the heavy Debt which the poor Catholicks of this City have incurred by forwarding the building, the unornamented and rude State in which the church is you are perfectly acquainted of—Being thus situated, and unable to extricate ourselves from the many and pressing difficulties which on all sides surround us, we should view your departure with despondent eyes, and weep over the loss of religion's friend and our only protector, were we not confident that your generous mind and religious heart will ever attend to the Interest of that Church which you established in his Majesty's name—We therefore most humbly entreat that you will please to represent our distressed situation at his Majesty's throne and petition for us his Royal grant, that our Vicar Apostolick may be enabled to depute a Priest to quest alms for our Church in the Island of Cuba, this being the only possible means we can devise to save us and our infant church from total destruction. In grateful remembrance of the many favours which we have received from his Catholick Majesty, we daily pray as in duty bound, that the Almighty

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

Donor of every gift may long preserve his precious life for the benefit of his faithful subjects, and his extensive Empire—Impressed with the most affectionate acknowledgements of your zeal for us and the advancement of God's holy church, we beseech the Almighty God may grant you a prosperous voyage and happy return, and that he may long preserve your health for his sacred Majesty's service—We have the honour to remain Sir, Your most obedient & most Humble Servants Revd. William O'Brien Dominick Lynch, In Behalf of the Trustees & Congregation to which have affixed our seal.

N. York 5th October 1789.

Honorable Don Diego de Gardoqui.<sup>13</sup>

Gardoqui replied to this letter three days later, in which he promised to intercede with the King for the continuance of the Royal interest in St. Peter's.<sup>14</sup>

At a meeting on November 2, 1789, the trustees made the following preparations for the journey of Father O'Brien to Cuba and Mexico:

That a letter be written (or two Memorials) in the Spanish language to the Bishop, Governor, & Citizens of Havana & the Island of Cuba; setting forth the distressed situation of Saint Peter's Church and that the same will be inevitably lost to the Catholic Congregation in the City of N York unless charitable and benevolent contributions are obtained for relief of the same. That to said Memorials be affixed the Seal of Saint Peter's, and that Revd. Mr. O'Brien be the bearer thereof.

Mr. Lynch proposed that each Trustee advance the sum of Twenty Dollars, part of which to be appropriated for the use of the Revd. Mr. O'Brien to defray his unavoidable expenses (if any) on his intended Voyage to Havana.<sup>15</sup>

The trustees subscribed a fund sufficient for the purpose and Father O'Brien departed for his trip through Cuba and Mexico.

During the absence of the Dominican missionary, a fellow member of the Order of Preachers, Father Michael Nicholas Burke, served as the temporary rector. He had come to the United States from the Irish Dominican Convent of Corpo Santo, Lisbon, Portugal, in 1789.<sup>16</sup> Father Burke was the only



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priest to attend the Catholics in New York during the epidemic of yellow fever of 1791, and after the return of the regular pastor in November 1792, he was sent by Bishop Carroll to attend scattered Catholics through the South.

The journey of Father O'Brien had met with distinct success. While in Mexico he enjoyed the kind hospitality of Archbishop Nuñez de Haro, of Mexico, who had been his friend and fellow student at the College of San Clemente de Españoles at Bologna.<sup>17</sup> Father O'Brien returned with \$4,920 in addition to a gift of \$1000 which had been sent during his absence by the Bishop and Chapter of Puebla de los Angeles.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Father O'Brien brought with him several paintings which were placed in the church. The only one remaining at St. Peter's today is *The Crucifixion* by José Maria Vallejo, a celebrated Mexican painter.<sup>19</sup> This symbol of an eternal obligation which New York Catholics owe to their fellow co-religionists in Mexico adorns the main altar of the present upper church.

In view of the present distressed condition of the Mexican Church, it may be apropos to cite the following testimonial of the gratitude of New York Catholics at the time and their continued dependence for financial assistance upon the same:

New York 2 May 1793.

Joseph de Jandenes, and  
Joseph Ignatius de Viar  
Philadelphia,

We had the honour to address you the 18th July last as Trustees of St. Peter's Church of this City, acknowledging with grateful thanks the receipt of One thousand Dollars which the Illustrious Bishop, and Cabildo of the City of Puebla de los Angeles had been pleased to send through your hands as a donation for the pressing urgencies and use of the Church.

We have now to request in behalf of said Catholic Congregation who always place the greatest confidence in your wishes to promote their welfare, that you will do them the favor to convey their United sincere thanks to the Bishop and Cabildo for this temporary proof of their generous, and charitable present which has filled the hearts of the Congregation with gratitude, the deed is committed to posterity



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for succeeding generations to learn, and admire their Benefactors who in the hour of distress, enabled them to raise, and secure a Temple for the Culture of Divine Service, and to the extension, and honour of our Holy Religion.

We mention with satisfaction, and pleasure that from the Beneficent contributions amounting to Four thousand, nine hundred, and Twenty Dollars (exclusive of the aforesaid gift from the Bishop, and Cabildo of Puebla de los Angeles) Received through the hands of our worthy Pastor the Reverend Mr. William O'Brien from his Catholic Majesty's faithful, and Loyal subjects St. Peter's Church has been extricated from the danger it was exposed to by the accumulation of heavy debts.

The present urgencies of the Church consist in the want of Funds to defray the expences of making an Altar, a Pulpit, Pews, Galleries, and other indispensable conveniences. But having no Revenue whatever the contributions of the Flock although encreasing in numbers are generally poor, and scarcely able to maintain one clergyman, therefore to complete these necessary works we are still compelled to solicit the aid, and assistance of the Benevolent and charitable to conclude what they have so far forwarded with distinguished merit, and Religious Piety. The estimates of cost amount to Ten thousand Dollars.

The Congregation feel a comfort in laying before you gentlemen their wants, and situation from a conviction of your goodness, and Protection, and that the information you will be pleased to give to the person who desired you to acquaint him of the particular exigencies of the church will be conveyed in the strongest terms, and expressions in order that the Bishop and Cabildo of Puebla de los Angeles may be satisfactorily informed of the true state of St. Peter's Church, their kind promise of further contributing to a grateful congregation.

We have no doubt of experiencing through your auspicious channel all necessary succour, and support and thereby add to the many favors already received.

We are with sentiments of great respect and sincere esteem. Gentlemen

Your most obedient servants

(signed) Dom. Lynch  
Jozé Roiz Silva  
Thomas Stoughton  
John Sullivan.<sup>20</sup>

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Before the return of Father O'Brien to New York, the trustees felt it necessary to address the Corporation of Trinity Church, to secure an abatement of the debt due by arrears in ground rent. By an indenture, made January 10, 1788, "The Rector and Inhabitants of the City of New York in Communion of the Church of England as by Law Established" agreed to transfer the five lots upon which the Church had been built to the Trustees of St. Peter's Church on condition that they pay "yearly and every year for ever hereafter on the twenty-fifth day of March in each of the said years . . . the rent or sum of one hundred and fifty Spanish milled Dollars or the value thereof in lawful money of the State of New York. . . ." <sup>21</sup>

The following year, however, in view of its straited circumstances, the Trustees could not meet their obligation, for in the papers of John Jones, who served as a vestryman of Trinity Church (1788-1800) is found the following:

Monday Oct 28 1789

Cap. Lewis acquainted the Committee, that a considerable Sum is due to the Corporation for the Rent of ground on which the Roman Catholic church stands, in consequence the committee determined to request the corporation may interfere or direct a mode to forward a settlement thereof. . . . <sup>22</sup>

This was about a month before Father O'Brien made his trip to Mexico. While he was still away, the Trustees addressed a petition to the Trinity Church Corporation in which they reviewed their difficulties and requested an abatement of the ground rent:

We earnestly solicit an abatement of the Debt due by arrears, and of our annual rent, in such proportion as your liberality shall suggest, and we will (tho' Poor) endeavour to discharge it punctually. And as we encrease in our Temporalities, we shall with grateful Hearts remember such relief, as in our present distressed circumstances we hope to experience from the Corporation of Trinity Church. <sup>23</sup>

(Signed)

New York 10th April 1792.

Dominick Lynch  
John Sullivan  
Jose Roiz Silva  
Thomas Stoughton  
Andrew Morris

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Trinity Church noted, at a meeting of the Corporation, on May 14, 1792, the receipt of the petition, and deferred consideration of it until a future date.<sup>24</sup> In the Spring of the following year, the Committee of Leases agreed to a remission of a portion of the demand but could not come to a unanimous determination upon the sum. The total arrears amounted to £300. Two of the committee were for relinquishing £150; three for £135; and two for £100. Accordingly they submitted the question for final determination to the Corporation itself.<sup>25</sup> That body acted favorably at a meeting on March 11, 1793, when the following resolution was adopted:

The Committee of Leases presented their Report relative to the Claim for rent due from the Roman Catholic Church which was confirmed and is to relinquish £150 of the back rent, upon this Condition that the residue of rent due on the 25th March Instant be immediately discharged; and the payments which may become due hereafter on said account be punctually complied with.<sup>26</sup>

That the church building at the time of the return of Father O'Brien was little more than four walls and a roof is evident from the resolution of the Trustees, on November 20, 1792:

Resolved 2dly. . . . That two or three able workmen good Master Carpenters be called upon as soon as possible with verbal notification to meet them on Thursday the 22d and Saturday the 24th Instant November 1792, in St. Peter's Church at 11 O in the morning of said days, there to take measurements in order to make plans, and estimate the cost of erecting the following, observing to Particularize the charge of each . . . Viz.

For, An Altar, and Sanctuary

- " A Sacristy, or Vestry-room 16 by 12 feet, and 9 feet high Adjoining the church on the West-end.
- " New Pews for lower floor, and Galleries.
- " Galleries, and Organ-loft.
- " Taking up the Present, sawing the Plank whole length in equal halves, and relaying the floor.
- " A Pulpit.
- " A Portico—with Stairs to the Galleries.
- " A Steeple upon the Plan of that of the New-church in Newark.



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Agreeably to the foregoing Resolution Joseph Newton, one of the Master builders in this City was notified to meet the following Gentlemen in St. Peter's church at 11 O'clock A. M. on Thursday the 22d Instant November 1792.

Revd. Mr. Wm. O'Brien,  
Mr. Dominick Lynch,  
Mr. Thomas Stoughton,  
Mr. Andrew Morris,  
Mr. Charles Neylon,

Mr. Newton having met the foregoing Gentlemen in the church agreeably to appointment where he took measurements has since informed the Revd. Mr. O'Brien that he would not undertake the erecting the beforementioned by estimate but that he would engage to accomplish the same by days work. He has since informed Mr. Andrew Morris that the Probable cost may be for Altar, Pulpit, and Pews £500. Portico and stairs £500. for Sacristy...£300. Galleries...£400. wch. sums together make £1700. And he gives his opinion that the whole may be completed for £2000.<sup>27</sup>

In anticipation of making these improvements in the Spring of 1793, Lynch and Stoughton, for the Trustees, sent a letter to the foremost Catholic of Albany, Thomas Barry, on December 8, 1792, in which they commissioned him to purchase for their account

One thousand Pine-boards, and Fifteen hundred white pine-plank, which are intended to make the Galleries, and Pews, but as they will require to be well seasoned before they can be fit to work up, you will be pleased to have them properly laid up, after you have made the purchase which is entirely left to your best judgment, as also your sending the same down to this City as early and cheap as you can in the Spring. Their amount of cost and charges you can value on us for, and shall be duly paid.

We are all endeavoring to lay in the Materials necessary for the Church of good quality, and as reasonable as possible.<sup>28</sup>

We are with much regard

Lynch & Stoughton

The interior of the church was completed and pews were offered for sale in the Spring of 1794.<sup>29</sup> Speculation was prevented by a clause "That any person that shall be known to let his pew



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for more than the just value, according to the yearly rent, shall be dispossessed of it, or fined as a trafficker in the church, the fine to be given to the poor."<sup>30</sup>

It may have been for the expenses incurred by the improvements made in the interior of the church, that the trustees, on June 1, 1795, gave notes amounting to \$3216.73 to Lynch and Stoughton "for advances made by them for account of St. Peter's Church."<sup>31</sup>

The year 1795 witnessed the visitation of a yellow fever scourge upon New York, as well as other American cities. The ship *Zephyr*, sailing from Port au Prince arrived in New York Harbor on July 19. Scarcely had she reached Old Slip, when a boy who had been long ailing died. The Health Officer visited the ship and after burying the corpse on Governors Island, he too succumbed. By the middle of the month it was clearly epidemic. Many people deserted the city to avoid what was considered the most terrible affliction to man.<sup>32</sup> By October 6, the list of dead totalled 525. During this affliction, the ministrations of Father O'Brien were endless. For two whole months, such were the demands upon his time, that he never entered his bed. In this work he was assisted by Abbé Louis Sibourd, who cheerfully did what he could.<sup>33</sup>

In the same year, the Vestry of Trinity Church again received a petition from the Trustees of St. Peter's "praying the Board to relinquish a Part of the Arrears now due, and an abatement of their Rent." In consequence the vestry decided "that the Board will dispose of to the Trustees of Saint Peter's Church in fee simple all those Lots under Lease to them for the sum of one thousand pounds to be paid in two months, and will remit and discharge them from all Back Rents due to this Corporation if such takes effect."<sup>34</sup> The transfer of the land, eleven years after the first leasehold was obtained, was effected in a deed, signed March 28, 1796, which, however, was not recorded in the Register's office until September 27, 1820.<sup>35</sup>

In 1796, a group of 121 Catholics of New York petitioned the Board of Trustees for an assistant to Father O'Brien. The memorial cited the rapid increase of the parish and the additional

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

burdens thrust upon the worthy pastor; that their children lacked sufficient instruction on Sunday afternoon for want of an assistant. They recommended, as a choice, the Reverend John Thayer, who was then in the city, provided he was acceptable to Bishop Carroll. They furthermore promised that if additional contributions were necessary to support an assistant, they were ready to assume the obligation.<sup>36</sup> The Trustees submitted the petition to Bishop Carroll, who upon consideration declined to appoint Thayer as the assistant to Father O'Brien.

In explanation of his attitude, Bishop Carroll stated that in view of the services of Father O'Brien to his parish, both here and in South America, and "his pastoral constancy during the melancholy period of last Summer," he (the Bishop) owed it to the merits of Father O'Brien not to appoint anyone in whom he would not have entire confidence. That Father O'Brien did not value Thayer's services highly is evident from a letter of his to Carroll in which he stated that Father Thayer did not want to work and that "he was always running around."<sup>37</sup> Bishop Carroll, however, sympathized with the needs of

a congregation so numerous, the want of such a one must be felt severely by you and them; especially if it be true, as represented to me that on this account, there are often no vespers and evening services on Sundays; very few catechistical instructions for the young; that many grow up to years of full maturity and ripe age without being ever called to the Sacrament of Penance, and the Blessed Eucharist; and that it is frequently impossible for one clergyman to give as early and constant attendance to the sick and dying as ought to be.<sup>38</sup>

He promised that as soon as it was possible he would secure the services of an assistant, and that until another clergyman could be sent

I beg you to make immediate provision for celebrating Vespers on Sundays and assigning days in every week for catechising the boys and girls of the congregation; using for that purpose the proper catechism of the diocese. I hope likewise it may be in your power to have High Mass every Sunday, celebrated by one priest. In this function as well as in that of Vespers Mr. Sibourd and the French priests with

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you will give their assistance. The former may likewise be of use for catechism.<sup>39</sup>

In 1798, a yellow fever epidemic of even greater virulence than the two preceding ones was productive of dreadful effects. From the latter end of July, when it first made its appearance, to the beginning of November when it ceased, the total fatalities numbered 2086, to which may be added two or three hundred of those who fled. When one considers that more than one third of the total inhabitants evacuated the city, and that the total population did not exceed 55,000, the death rate was considerable.<sup>40</sup> There were interred in St. Peter's Cemetery during the three month period, eighty-six of the congregation. This number, however, did not include all the Catholic dead. Washington Square, purchased for a burial place by the City in 1796, became a Potter's Field, wherein not only strangers and the poor but many notable persons were buried.<sup>41</sup> In the list of burials, there are, "Bremmer, John, grave digger of the Catholic Church, and Mary his wife."<sup>42</sup> Susan, a black, from the house of José R. Silva, 28 William Street."<sup>43</sup> José Roiz Silva, who had been faithful to St. Peter's from the start, was likewise a victim.<sup>44</sup>

Father O'Brien, weighted down with the cares of tending the sick and burying the dead, was assisted in his work by the return in 1798 or 1799 of Father Burke, who had been acting rector during his trip to Mexico. Father Burke, however, was drowned while travelling in February 1800.<sup>45</sup>

Father Burke was succeeded at old St. Peter's by Father Bartholomew Augustine McMahon, O. P., who had served for several months after his arrival from Ireland at St. Joseph's Church, Philadelphia.<sup>46</sup> He, too, died in July of the same year, possibly of yellow fever.<sup>47</sup>

A notion of the financial condition of St. Peter's at this time is contained in a letter of the Trustees to Bishop Carroll. The church had a debt of \$6500, all but \$2000 of which was owed to the Trustees; receipts, largely from pew rents amounted to approximately \$1500, while the expenses averaged about \$1400.<sup>48</sup>

The need for an assistant to replace Father McMahon was so



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urgent that the Trustees, in September 1800, petitioned Bishop Carroll for the services of the Reverend Matthew O'Brien, D. D.<sup>49</sup> Doctor O'Brien was a man of great learning and a master of pulpit oratory.<sup>50</sup> After the Catholics of Albany had laid the cornerstone of their first Church, St. Mary's, on September 13, 1797, Dr. O'Brien was appointed as pastor. He did not remain there long, however, since Bishop Carroll appointed him a pastor for the parish at Natchez. The Trustees of St. Peter's, learning of his intended trip to his new post, induced him to defer his departure until they should learn the pleasure of the Bishop.<sup>51</sup> Doctor O'Brien remained in Albany until June of 1800 and the following year, Bishop Carroll having in the meantime acted favorably, he was located at St. Peter's.<sup>52</sup>

The year 1800 is also memorable in the history of St. Peter's for the action taken by the Trustees in authorizing the establishment of a Catholic free school—the first of its kind in New York. At this time that city had no public school system. Education was either a matter of private interest or it was left to the initiative of religious congregations. At the time that the Board took this far-reaching step, the only schools outside the private tutoring establishments were the religious "Charity Schools" maintained by the Dutch Reformed, Episcopalian and Presbyterian denominations.<sup>53</sup>

It has been said that the records of Trinity Church indicate that contributions in aid of the Charity School were received not only from the Episcopalian Chapels of Trinity Church but also from Catholics. The minutes of the vestry for 1796 acknowledge the receipt of a sum from the "Minister of the Roman Catholic Congregation"<sup>54</sup> who could have been no other than Father William O'Brien.

Realizing that the first school established by the Free School Society of the City of New York was not opened until May 17, 1806, the following resolutions of the Trustees of St. Peter's, adopted March 30, 1800, are all the more significant:

Resolved 1st. That a free School for the Education of Children, be, and is hereby established and that a proper Master be chosen to Superintend said School. . . .



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“ Secondly that a Committee be appointed to carry into effect the above resolution  
Thirdly that Messrs. Morris, Neylon, C. Heeney and the Revd. Dr. O'Brien, be and are hereby charged for the due and immediate Execution of the same. . . .<sup>55</sup>

That the school was not immediately established is learned from a letter of Father O'Brien to Bishop Carroll, in which we get a glimpse of the organization of the church as it was at that time:

We have, thanks to God, given an impulse to the mind of the congregation and an organ, organist and choir are on foot and a singing master attends to form and direct the children, many of whom would surprise you by their performance. All is conducted on the plan of Philada. and Balto. and our Church is crowded. We have catechism twice a week previous to the singing and in train for preparing first Communion. The organ is more than paid for (550 dollars) and answers very well; and we have a crimson damask curtain for the altar to correspond with that which fronts the choir and organ. In a word I believe all promises as you would wish. The next object is a charity school.<sup>56</sup>

Towards the end of the year (1801) the congregation of St. Peter's had

vastly increased and even now would fill two churches. We will finish our steeple in the ensuing Spring. I purchased a bell. Our church yard is nearly paid for. We will put a new Iron Railing to the steps of the church and open another door. Could we erect a chapel of ease in the Extremity of this city where most of the poor Catholics are thronged, it would make us happy.<sup>57</sup>

In March of 1802, the church was robbed of several of the sacred Mass vessels. The culprit was arrested and the stolen property was traced to the person to whom it supposedly had been sold. Unfortunately, they had been broken into pieces. They were precious to the Church of St. Peter, having been the gift of King Charles IV of Spain.<sup>58</sup>

Probably the most memorable event in connection with the history of Old St. Peter's was the reception into the Church of Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Bayley Seton (1774-1821), foundress of the

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American branch of the Sisters of Charity. She was the daughter of Dr. Richard Bayley, who was famous for his heroic work as Health Officer of the Port of New York in the yellow fever epidemics that ravaged the city. Her mother, the daughter of an Anglican minister, died when Elizabeth was but three years of age. The father married again and among the children from this second union was Guy Carleton Bayley, whose son, James Roosevelt Bayley, a convert, became the Archbishop of Baltimore.

Elizabeth Ann was married, in 1794 in St. Paul's Episcopal Church to William Magee Seton, a respectable merchant of the city who had spent his early life in a mercantile house at Leghorn, Italy.

Business troubles having occasioned the death of her father-in-law, Elizabeth shared with her husband the care of his orphaned family as well as the financial perplexities in which he was involved. The death of her own father in 1801, as a result of his untiring work among the yellow fever victims of the port, caused her great anguish. Then, in the Spring of 1803, Mr. Seton, whose health was delicate, was required to take a sea voyage. They accordingly started for Leghorn, where the Filicchi brothers, business friends of the Setons, lived. The Setons brought with them their eight-year-old daughter, Anna Maria; while their four younger children were left to the care of her beloved sister-in-law, Rebecca.

Her services as nurse were patiently and heroically administered not only during the voyage, but after their arrival in Italy where they were subjected to a long period of detention in quarantine, and until Mr. Seton's death at Pisa, in December, 1803.

Elizabeth remained for some months in Italy under the care and protection of the Filicchis, who had shown her every consideration and kindness. In her visits to various Catholic shrines she gained valuable experience, and the practical charity of the Filicchis had a lasting effect upon her.

Elizabeth was but a month in New York, having been accompanied here by Antonio Filicchi, when her sister-in-law, Rebecca, died (July 1804). Then began for her a time of spiritual search and mental perplexity.

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Philippo Filicchi, anticipating that in her environment she would need counsel and support, gave her a letter of introduction to Bishop Carroll of Baltimore.<sup>59</sup> She, however, did not take advantage of it; and upon the advice of Antonio she informed her family and her pastor, the distinguished Reverend Henry Hobart, of her intention of embracing the Catholic Faith.

Her relatives expressed indignation and contempt for her purpose; and her dear friend, Doctor Hobart, making earnest efforts to dissuade her, finally induced Elizabeth to study a series of controversial works under his direction. In the course of this instruction, Doctor Hobart set forth in writing his arguments against the Catholic Church, which for the time caused Elizabeth to feel there was no longer a necessity for making a change.

She showed the Hobart manuscript, however, to Antonio, who suggested sending it to Bishop Carroll. Elizabeth felt, however, that this would take too long; whereupon, Antonio brought it to Father William O'Brien, who returned it the same evening with an answer. He, likewise, advised her reading a book called *England's Conversion and Reformation*. Antonio induced her to write to Bishop Carroll; she did compose a letter which, upon advice of Doctor Hobart, she did not send. Nevertheless, Antonio wrote Doctor Carroll, enclosing Elizabeth's letter as an explanation of the situation. The Bishop's reply, strong and clear, impressed Mrs. Seton with its tone of authority. In addition, she admitted to Antonio that the evidence contained in *England's Reformation* was "too conclusive to admit any reply." On September 8, 1804, Elizabeth wrote to Antonio:

Mr. Hobart was here for the first time yesterday since your absence, and was so entirely out of all patience that it was in vain to show him the [Bishop's] letter. He says, "The Church is corrupt. We have returned to the primitive doctrine, and what more would you have when you act according to your best judgment?" I tell him that would be enough for this world, but I fear for the next to meet another question. His visit was short and painful on both sides. God direct me, for I see it is in vain to look for help from anyone but Him."<sup>60</sup>

About two weeks later, we have this picture of Elizabeth:



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I have just now the kindest letter from your Antonio. He is still in Boston, and would not have been well pleased to see me in St. Paul's Church to-day, but peace and persuasion about proprieties, etc., prevailed. Yet I got into a side pew which turned my face toward the Catholic church in the next street, and twenty times found myself speaking to the Blessed Sacrament there, instead of looking at the naked altar before me, or minding the routine of prayers. Tears aplenty, and sighs as silent and as deep as when I first entered your blessed Church of the Annunciation in Florence, all turning to the one, only desire to see the way most pleasing to my God, whichever that way is.<sup>61</sup>

Yet for her there were doubts, hesitations, uncertainties and withal, keen suffering:

Passing the Roman church I stopped and read the tombstones, lifting up my heart to God for pity, appealing to Him as my Judge. How joyfully I would enter there and kiss the steps of His altar! Every day to visit my Savior there and pour out my soul before Him is the supreme desire. But oh, Antonio, my most dear brother, should I ever dare to bring there a doubtful, distracted mind, a confusion of fears and hesitations, trembling before God, in anguish and terror lest it should offend Him, whom only it desires to please.<sup>62</sup>

On December 17, 1804, she went to St. George's Church, resolved that if God would not show her the way, she would remain in the faith in which she was born:

But if I left the house a Protestant, I returned to it a Catholic, I think, since I determined to go no more to the Protestants, being much more troubled than ever I thought I could be while I remembered God is my God. But, so it was, that the bowing of my heart before the Bishop to receive his Absolution which is given publicly and universally to all in the church, I had not the least faith in his prayer, and looked for an apostolic loosing of my sins, which by the books Mr. Hobart had given me to read, I find they do not claim or admit. Then trembling to Communion, half dead with the inward struggle, when they said the "Body and Blood of Christ." Oh, Amabilia, no words for my trial! And I remember in my old prayer book of former edition, when I was child, it was not, as now, said to be spiritually taken and received.<sup>63</sup>



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The New Year found her in a state of supreme desolation, resolved to abandon the struggle of seeking a solution. On the Feast of Epiphany, January 6, 1805, she remained at home with "her piety lost, her faith extinct, her soul crushed by a thousand crosses."<sup>64</sup> Suddenly, she picked up a volume of Bourdaloue and turned to the sermon of the day, felt that its message was meant for her "who had lost the star of faith."

With no hesitation, and no delay, her desire was to obtain an interview with Father O'Brien. She found it difficult to see him, however, owing, no doubt, to his many duties. Elizabeth then directed a letter to Father Cheverus, of Boston. Receiving an answer from him and also a letter from Bishop Carroll, she decided to enter the Church at once and so informed her family.

Doctor Hobart again visited her to warn her that she was responsible for the faith of her children while those about her represented Catholics in New York as "the offscourings of the people," and their congregation as "a public nuisance."

But [she added] this does not trouble me in the least. The congregation of a city may be very shabby, yet very pleasing to God, or in it very bad people, yet that cannot hurt its faith. And should the priest himself deserve no more respect than is here allowed him, his ministry of the sacraments would be the same to me, if I ever shall receive them. I seek but God and His Church, and expect to find my peace in them, not in the people.<sup>65</sup>

On Ash Wednesday, 1805, Elizabeth Seton, turning the corner of Barclay Street, first entered St. Peter's Church:

Here, my God, I go! said I, "heart all to you!" Entering, how that heart died away, as it were, in silence before the little Tabernacle, and the great Crucifixion over it.<sup>66</sup> "Ah my God, here let me rest!" said I, and down the head on the bosom, and the knees on the bench. If I could have thought of anything but God! There was enough, I suppose, to have astonished a stranger by the hurrying over one another, but I came only to visit the divine Majesty. I knew not what it meant until afterward, that it was a day they receive ashes, the beginning of Lent. The Irish priest, who seems just to have come there, talked of death so familiarly that he delighted and revived me.<sup>67</sup>

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Elizabeth formally abjured Protestantism on March 14, 1805<sup>68</sup> and was received into the Church by Father Matthew O'Brien, in the presence of her devoted friend, Antonio Filicchi. After confession of belief in the Church, she returned home

light of heart and cool of head, the first time these many long months, but not without begging our Lord to wrap my heart deep in that opened side, so well represented in the beautiful Crucifixion, or lock it up in His little tabernacle, where I shall now rest forever. Oh, Amabilia, the endearments of this day with the children, and the play of the heart with God, while keeping up their little farces! Anna suspects; I anticipate her delight when I take her next Sunday.<sup>69</sup>

Having prepared herself for a general Confession, she relates (March 20, 1805):

It is done! Easy enough; the kindest, most respectable confessor is this Mr. O'Brien, with the compassion and yet firmness in this work of mercy which I would have expected from our Lord Himself. Our Lord Himself I saw alone in him, both in his and my part of this venerable sacrament. For, oh, Amabilia! how awful those words of unloosing after thirty years of bondage! I felt as if my chains fell as those of St. Peter at the touch of the divine Messenger. My God, what new scenes for my soul!<sup>70</sup>

Two days later, Annunciation Day: "I see nothing but the little bright cross on St. Peter's steeple. The children are wild with their pleasure of going with me in turn."<sup>71</sup>

March 25, her First Communion:

at last, God is mine and I am His! Now let all go its round. I have received Him! The awful impressions of the evening before, fears of not having done all to prepare, and yet even the transports of confidence and hope in His goodness. My God! to the last breath of life, will I not remember this night of watching for morning's dawn, the fearful beating heart so pressing to be gone, the long walk to town, but every step counted nearer that street, then nearer that Tabernacle, then nearer the moment He would enter the poor, poor little dwelling so all His own.

And when He did, the first thought I remember was: "Let God arise! Let His enemies be scattered!" For it seemed to me my King had come to take His throne, and

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instead of the humble, tender welcome I had expected to give Him, it was but a triumph of joy and gladness that the Deliverer was come, and my defense and shield, and strength and salvation made mine for this world and the next.<sup>72</sup>

A sequel to the reception of Mrs. Seton into the Church was a similar reception of Cecelia Seton, her sister-in-law the following year by Father Hurley.

A tribute to the heroic work of the priests of St. Peter's, during the recurrence of yellow fever in 1805, is contained in an official address to the people of New York by the Secretary of the Board of Health. Presenting his observations not in support of any theories "but merely with a view to state facts, from which the intelligent reader can, at leisure, draw his conclusions," he remarked that

The three clergymen of the Roman Church, viz. the Reverend Dr. William O'Brien, the Reverend Dr. Matthew O'Brien, and the Reverend Mr. Hurley, were incessant in administering spiritual consolation to the sick of their congregation, nor did they, in the discharge of this duty, avoid the most filthy cellars, or most infected places, yet none of them was, in the least, infected with fever, during the season.<sup>73</sup>

The first Catholic office-holder of New York City was Andrew Morris, a trustee of St. Peter's Church. He was chosen the Assistant Alderman of the First Ward in 1802 and continued as Alderman until 1806.<sup>74</sup> In that year, his associate Francis Cooper, likewise of St. Peter's Congregation, was elected to the New York State Assembly, the first Catholic to receive such a designation.

According to the Constitution of 1777, a naturalized citizen was required to renounce and abjure allegiance and subjection "in all matters ecclesiastical and civil," to any person or State. When the laws of the State were revised in 1801, this test was retained for all civil and military officers of the State as a *sine qua non*. So that unless Catholics "made their conscience subservient to their ambition and desire of honours they must ever remain excluded from office."<sup>75</sup>



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Francis Cooper refused to take such an oath. The Catholics of the city accordingly held a meeting on January 6, 1805 at which a memorial was drawn up petitioning the Senate and Assembly of the State to remove this last vestige of legal restriction against a religious group. In view of the importance of the document, it is here printed in full:

To the Honorable the Legislature of the State of New York in Senate and Assembly convened.

The Memorial of Certain Citizens resident in the City of New York, professing the Roman Catholic Religion Respectfully Represents.

That your Memorialists, who compose a considerable portion of the population of this City while conscious of possessing sentiments of the purest and the most steadfast allegiance and loyal attachment to the Constitution and government of the United States in general and of this State in particular, and of discharging their social and civil duties with a fidelity inferior to that of no other class of their fellow citizens, feel with deepest concern that they are deprived of the benefits of the free and equal participation of all the rights and privileges of Citizens, granted by the enlightened framers of the Constitution of the United States, (of which it forms one of the most admirable features) and by the 38th Section of the Constitution of this State to all denominations of Christians, of what religious profession or worship, soever without discrimination or preference. In direct contradiction to this liberal principle, the form of oath prescribed to be taken previously on entering on any office civil or military in this State, by subjecting them to a religious test, to which their consciences are opposed, operates upon them as an absolute disqualification.

Less injurious to the feelings and degrading to the character of your memorialists, would have been if the Constitution had not by that Section, held up their reasonable expectation a fair participation of the advantages as well as the burdens of citizenship, than to have the cup of equalized rights dashed from their lips, by a subsequent determination, and an invidious barrier, surmountable only by perjury or apostacy, placed between them and those rights, tho' yielding, to none of their fellow-citizens in attachment to the prosperity and independence of the State.

Your Memorialists cannot persuade themselves that the framers of the Constitution in 1777, or the revisers of the



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laws in 1801, intended that the form of oath, above referred to, should leave them, and their descendants, no alternative between a total exclusion from every office of honour, profit or trust, in the State and a virtual abjuration of the religious principles of their forefathers and themselves. They are willing (consistently) with these principles solemnly and without equivocation or mental reservation to swear that they renounce and abjure all allegiance and subjection to every foreign power however titled in all matters not only civil but also ecclesiastical, as far as they may interfere with, or in the smallest degree affect the freedom, independence or safety of the State;—but as the Bishop of Rome is the acknowledged supreme head of the profession of which they are members they cannot renounce and abjure all subjection to the decrees of the Roman Catholic Church as promulgated by him in matters purely and solely, spiritual, and which cannot interfere either with the civil or religious rights of their brethren of other denominations, without a total dereliction of the religious principles they profess which inculcate an abhorrence of perjury, as well as of all the other crimes and vices that can injure or disturb society. None of those States which adopted the liberal and just principle of the Constitution of the United States, can exhibit an instance of any danger or inconvenience having resulted from non-existence of a religious test. Your Memorialists relying on the justice of their claim, and the unprejudiced liberality of this honorable Legislature, flatter themselves, the obnoxious part of the law will be repealed, or that it may be modified or explained in a way that may be consonant to the spirit of this memorial so that they and numerous other citizens of the same profession resident in the various districts of the State may have cause to unite with their fellow citizens in general, in self-gratulation for the unshackled enjoyment of the invaluable blessing of living under a liberal government, and the influence of benign laws exempt from the unjust and oppressive disqualifications on the score of religion, which disfigure the politics of several European nations.

And your Memorialists will ever pray.

Signed at a general meeting of the Roman Catholics of the City of New York, convened 6th January, 1806.<sup>76</sup>

ANDREW MORRIS,  
*Chairman*

JNO. BYRNE,  
*Secretary.*

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Although the Memorial received thirteen hundred signatures within a few days, it precipitated decided opposition from the Federalist party in the Legislature.<sup>77</sup> Father Hurley, writing an account of the happenings to Bishop Carroll, said:

some of them [the Federalists] indulged their illiberality so far as to cast upon us the filthy dregs of . . . prejudice and animosity. Van Ness and Van Vetchen were the two champions that entered into the lists of intolerance. The first I presume you have heard of before. His scurrility was of the lowest, his invective the most bitter.<sup>78</sup>

It was all to no purpose, however, since the bill passed the Assembly on February 4, by a vote of 63-26;<sup>79</sup> and in the Senate it was carried with only one dissenting vote.<sup>80</sup>

Francis Cooper took his seat in the Assembly on February 7. The *American Citizen*, publishing the memorial on February 12, made the following editorial comment:

The Subjoined petition of the Roman Catholic Church, which embraces a great number of respectable citizens is published to show that their claim, which has been recently agitated in the legislature of this State with success is just and such as no man exempt from religious prejudices, can object to. We congratulate the Church on the relief which has been granted. Religion is most prosperous where it is most free. In all countries religious distinctions are odious but in none are they more so than in *this*.<sup>81</sup>

On Christmas eve, 1806, St. Peter's Church was the scene of a riotous demonstration which originated

with a desperate association of unprincipled men, calling themselves *Highbinders*, who, under pretence of demolishing houses of ill fame, commit the most disorderly practices upon peaceable and unoffending citizens. A party of these banditti, amounting to about fifty, assembled on Christmas Eve, in front of the Roman Catholic church in Barclay-street, with the expectation that certain ceremonies, usual in Catholic countries, but generally omitted here, would be performed. The highbinders insisted upon the church doors being opened, and that certain ceremonies should commence. A member of the corporation and of the church prevailed upon them to retire; but they returned a second time, abused the watchman, and did not disperse until a very late hour.<sup>82</sup>

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The indignant Irish in the vicinity of the Church collected the following evening; the upshot was a second riot, during the course of which a constable was killed. The mob which had collected was about to set out "to pull down the houses inhabited by the Irish" when Mayor DeWitt Clinton arrived with reinforcements and succeeded in quelling the disturbance.

Mayor Clinton issued a proclamation shortly after in which he deprecated the action of "a number of disorderly persons with a view of insulting the congregation of the Roman Catholic Church" in violating the public peace. He offered a reward for the discovery of the leaders of the crime as well as the murderer of the constable.<sup>83</sup>

One of the relics of Old St. Peter's Church (the present church dates from 1836) is the bell which called the parishioners to Mass every morning. Still hanging under the roof of the present church, although its tones have been stilled for many years, it contains the following inscription:

The Rev. William O'Brien, Rev. Matthew O'Brien, Pastors of St. Peter's Church, New York. Thomas Stoughton, John Sullivan, Cornelius Heeney, Michael Roth, Francis Cooper, John Byrne, Andrew Morris.

COSSE, Founder.

Made under the inspection of Charles Sherry at Nantes, 30th of June, 1806.<sup>84</sup>

The rectorship of Father O'Brien was now drawing to a close. He had spent twenty years of his life among the Catholics of New York. Coming to St. Peter's when the church building "was hardly more than a mere barn"<sup>85</sup> he had seen the church and its congregation develop as the city itself grew. Arriving in New York when the congregation was torn with dissension, he had left it peaceful and happy, as evidenced by the tribute of respect and affection tendered Bishop Carroll by the Board of Trustees.<sup>86</sup> Having labored among his flock during three serious yellow fever epidemics,<sup>87</sup> he was now spent and in poor health.<sup>88</sup> Justly entitled to the credit for having placed Catholicism on a firm footing in New York, he resigned from the active ministry and left St. Peter's in August, 1807.<sup>89</sup> On January 22, 1810,

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"out of regard and respect to the Revd. Mr. O'Brien," the trustees voted him an annual pension of \$500, which was the same amount as the salaries paid to the active officiating clergy at the time.<sup>90</sup> He remained in New York, however, until his death on May 14, 1816, and was buried by the side of the church. When the old cemetery surrounding St. Peter's Church was removed, the original monument on his grave was placed in the basement wall of the new church, in the passage leading to the sacristy.<sup>91</sup> It bears the following inscription:

UNDER THIS HUMBLE TURF  
REPOSE THE MORTAL REMAINS  
OF THE  
MUCH TO BE REGRETTED AND ONCE VENERABLE  
PASTOR OF ST. PETER'S,  
THE REV. WILLIAM V. O'BRIEN,  
WHO DEPARTED THIS LIFE ON THE 14TH OF MAY  
1816,  
AGED SEVENTY-SIX YEARS.

Who is there that has not heard of his piety,  
His benevolence, his charity, his zeal during  
The ravages of the yellow fever  
In the memorable years of '95 and '98?  
Yes! "I was sick, and you visited me."—MATT. XXV. 36.  
Reader! pass not by without offering up some  
Short prayer for the benefit of his soul;  
For Remember that "It is a holy and wholesome  
Thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed  
From their sins."—2 Macc. xii, 46.

R. I. P.

Father O'Brien was succeeded as pastor by Father Louis Sibourd who had acted on various occasions as assistant in New York in administering to the French.<sup>92</sup> He was located in New York from 1805 to 1807. In 1805, Father Sibourd declined the offer of Bishop Carroll to assume the pastorate of Charleston, South Carolina, indicating his unwillingness to go because of the troubled conditions there.<sup>93</sup> On March 9, 1807 the Board of Trustees of St. Peter's petitioned Carroll for the removal of the "little Doctor" because of his lack of facility in English.<sup>94</sup>



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This deficiency is the probable explanation of his short stay in New York, for he left St. Peter's in November 1808.<sup>95</sup> During his stay in New York, he was for a time the confessor and director of Mother Seton.<sup>96</sup> It was through him that she met Bishop Dubourg who urged her to leave New York for Baltimore. In 1820 Abbé Sibourd became the Vicar General of Bishop Dubourg of New Orleans and in 1826 went with the latter to the See of Montauban, France, where he died as Canon.<sup>97</sup>

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>May 10, 1788, Georgetown Archives, Shea Transcript, 30.6.

<sup>2</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, March 18, 1788, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup>Carroll to Antonelli, April 19, 1788, *loc. cit.*

<sup>4</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 351.

<sup>5</sup>Letter of Father V. F. O'Daniel, O. P., August 23, 1934, to the writer.

<sup>6</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church, April 13, 1789-April 23, 1810*, Archives of St. Patrick's Cathedral, New York.

<sup>7</sup>*Researches*, V, 73 ff.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas F. Meehan, "Some Pioneer Catholic Laymen in New York—Dominick Lynch and Cornelius Heeney," *Records and Studies*, IV, 286.

The New York Public Library, Manuscript Division, possesses a hitherto unpublished letter written by Father William O'Brien to John Stoughton of Boston. Whether this is the same person or a son of the above Juan is uncertain. It reads as follows:

New York 6 July 1795.

My dear friend,

Permit me to congratulate you on your safe arrival at Boston, where I trust you will be long happy, I avail myself, of the present opportunity to send thro your safe channell the holy oils to your worthy Pastor Doctor Matignon, who I presume has made himself known to you and I also recommend Mr. Robrahn the bearer of this letter, to your kind offices, he is a Prussian Merchant much esteemed here by all who have the pleasure of his acquaintance. You know that I am always at your commands, your brother and family are all well. I am Sir with true esteem

Your most O H S

William O'Brien

To John Stoughton, Esq.

<sup>9</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 34 ff.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>12</sup>Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 30.6; *Researches*, XVII, 8 f.

<sup>13</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 26 ff.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>16</sup>Letter of Father O'Daniel to the writer, August 23, 1934. The *New York Directory* of 1791 and 1792 gives him as "pastor of St. Peter's Church." Likewise, the baptismal records of St. Peter's from November 1789 to October 1792 are in a handwriting different from that which precedes and follows.

<sup>17</sup>*The Illustrated Catholic Family Almanac*, 1873, New York, The Catholic Publication Society, 56.

<sup>18</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 40.

<sup>19</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>20</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 40.

<sup>21</sup>Counterpart of a Deed to Trustees of the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Peter's Church, January 10, 1788. This original is in the possession of Trinity Church Corporation, for permission to secure a photostatic copy of which the writer is obligated to Mr. Lawson Purdy, Controller.

<sup>22</sup>Stewart and Jones Collection of Papers, Manuscript Division, New York Public Library.

<sup>23</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 36.

<sup>24</sup>*Minutes of the Vestry, Corporation of Trinity Church, 1791-1826* II, 11.

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- <sup>26</sup>February 22, 1793. *Stewart and Jones Collection of Papers, loc. cit.*
- <sup>27</sup>*Minutes of the Vestry, Corporation of Trinity Church, 1791-1826*, II, 18.
- <sup>28</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 39.
- <sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 39 b.
- <sup>30</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 430.
- <sup>31</sup>Shea, *History of the Churches in New York City*, 594.
- <sup>32</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 41 b.
- <sup>33</sup>McMaster, *op. cit.*, II, 243 ff; Bennett (*op. cit.*, 421) says 732 people died, many of whom were recent Catholic immigrants.
- <sup>34</sup>Father O'Brien to Bishop Carroll, April 14, 1796; cited in William S. McLaughlin, *Collections Historical, St. Peter's Church and St. Patrick's (Old) Cathedral in New York 1783-1913*. Unpublished Notes by the Sacristan of St. Patrick's Cathedral.
- <sup>35</sup>*Minutes of the Vestry, Corporation of Trinity Church*, II, June 8, 1795; cited in Bennett, *op. cit.*, 421.
- <sup>36</sup>Liber 146, 274.
- <sup>37</sup>*Researches*, VIII, 133 ff.
- <sup>38</sup>Letter of O'Brien to Carroll, April 14, 1796; cited in McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 46.
- <sup>39</sup>Letter of Carroll to O'Brien, July 5, 1796, *Researches*, XVII, 15.
- <sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>41</sup>James Hardie, *An Account of the Malignant Fever Lately Prevalent in the City of New York*, New York, Hartin and McFarland, 1799, 124.
- <sup>42</sup>Martha J. Lamb, *History of the City of New York: Its Origin, Rise and Progress*, New York, Barnes, 1880, II, 449.
- <sup>43</sup>Hardie, *op. cit.*, 91.
- <sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.
- <sup>45</sup>Bennett, *op. cit.*, 424.
- <sup>46</sup>Shea, II, 429.
- <sup>47</sup>He is sometimes erroneously called Anthony.
- <sup>48</sup>Letter of Father O'Daniel to the writer, August 23, 1934.
- <sup>49</sup>January 10, 1800. Shea, *op. cit.*, II, 430; McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 51.
- <sup>50</sup>Georgetown Archives, Shea Collection, 30.10; *Researches*, VIII, 176.
- <sup>51</sup>He has frequently been mentioned as the brother of William O'Brien, and also as a Dominican. There is no evidence that either of these statements is true. The frontispiece of a volume published by O'Brien in 1798 would indicate that he was not a Dominican: "*Sermons on Some of the Most Important Subjects of Morality and Religion*, by Reverend Matthew O'Brien, D.D., Cork (Ireland) Haly, 1798." Father O'Daniel, the Dominican historian, says (in letter to the writer) that he was not of the Order.
- <sup>52</sup>Georgetown Archives, Shea Transcript, 30.10; *Researches*, VIII, 176; cf., XXII, 317.
- <sup>53</sup>Father Matthew O'Brien entered his first signature to a baptism on January 14, 1802, though he was in St. Peter's in 1801. His last signature is on January 13, 1807, and it was inserted after April 30, 1807.
- <sup>54</sup>Thomas Boese, *Public Education in the City of New York: Its History, Condition, and Statistics*. An Official Report to the Board of Education; New York, Harper, 1869, 24.
- <sup>55</sup>Dix, *op. cit.*, II, 146 f.
- <sup>56</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 42 b.
- <sup>57</sup>*Researches*, VIII, 135.
- <sup>58</sup>O'Brien to Carroll, November 16, 1801. Baltimore Cathedral Archives, cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 53.
- <sup>59</sup>The New York *Evening Post*, March 31, 1802; cited by *Researches*, XIX, 183.

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<sup>60</sup>Madame de Barberey, *Elizabeth Seton*. Translated by Joseph B. Code, New York, Macmillan, 1927, 101.

<sup>61</sup>Elizabeth to Antonio Filicchi, September 8, 1804. *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>62</sup>Elizabeth to Amabilia Filicchi, September 25, 1804. *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>63</sup>Elizabeth to Antonio Filicchi, October 11, 1804. *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>64</sup>Elizabeth to Amabilia Filicchi, December 19, 1804. *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>67</sup>This was the altar-piece, the painting of Vallejo, which Father O'Brien brought back from Mexico, and which still adorns St. Peter's.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 140 f.

<sup>69</sup>The early historians of Mother Seton's life, i.e., White, De Barberey, Sadlier, etc., assert that she entered the Church on "Ash Wednesday, March 14." But Ash Wednesday of 1805 was on February 27. Dr. Souvay (*Catholic Historical Review*, V, 230) prints the original text of Mother Seton's Journal to Amabilia Filicchi: "the thousand tears of prayers and cries from the uncertain soul which not succeeded, until Ash Wednesday 14th March 1805 it entered the Ark of Peter with its beloved ones." Doctor Souvay holds that what she meant was to mark the whole course of her entrance in the Church, from Ash Wednesday, when she took the first step to that effect by going to St. Peter's, to March 14, when she was received. Code, in his translation of De Barberey, has adopted Souvay's interpretation, which accordingly, I have followed. Likewise, the question of Mother Seton's baptism in the Catholic Church has been raised. The Register of St. Peter's Church reveals no record of her baptism, conditional or otherwise. Neither has a record been found in any Episcopalian Church. (Trinity Church records were lost in the fire of 1776). Either that Episcopalian baptism was regarded as valid, or that conditional baptisms were not recorded by the priests of St. Peter's at the time, may explain the omission. Reverend Charles White (*Life of Mrs. Eliza A. Seton*, 3d Edition, Baltimore, Kelly, 1879, 156) believes she was baptised conditionally, whereas Doctor Souvay (*loc. cit.*, 237) advocates the following conclusion: "The probability against Mrs. Seton's baptism at St. Peter's remains extremely great and bordering on certitude, whereas the probability of her being baptized is hardly more than a mere possibility."

<sup>70</sup>De Barberey-Code, *op. cit.*, 141.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 142 f.

<sup>74</sup>James Hardie, *An Account of the Malignant Fever, Which Prevailed in the City of New York; during the Autumn of 1805*, New York, Southwick and Hardcastle, 1805, 181.

<sup>75</sup>Thomas F. Meehan, "Tales of Old New York," *Records and Studies*, XVIII, 121 f.

<sup>76</sup>Letter of Father Hurley to Carroll, January 6, 1806, Baltimore Cathedral Archives, Case 4G 8-9; printed in *Records*, XX, 278 f. reprinted in *Researches*, XI, 182 ff.

<sup>77</sup>*American Citizen*, February 12, 1806; *Records of St. Peter's Church*; Reprinted in *Researches*, XI, 182 ff.

<sup>78</sup>*Records of St. Peter's Church*, 51.

<sup>79</sup>Hurley to Carroll, n. d.; B. C. A. Case G 12, printed in *Records*, XX, 275 ff.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>Letters of Trustees to Carroll, February 13, 1806; *Researches*, XI, 184.

<sup>82</sup>*St. Peter's Records*, 50; *Researches*, XI, 182.



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<sup>62</sup>The *American Register*, reprinted in *Researches*, XVI, 149.

<sup>63</sup>*Researches*, XVI, 150.

<sup>64</sup>Farley *op. cit.*, 43.

<sup>65</sup>Letter of O'Brien to Carroll, July 27, 1807, cited from the notes of J. R. Bayley by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>66</sup>June 11, 1806; *Researches*, IX, 64; cf., *Records and Studies*, XIX, 123.

<sup>67</sup>Doctor Bayley, the Health Commissioner, stated that he was the only clergyman who remained in the city, the rest all fled (probably in 1795). McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>68</sup>The notion of Smith (*op. cit.*, I, 41), that he "lost health and mind" has no basis in fact.

<sup>69</sup>The last baptismal entry by him is August 17.

<sup>70</sup>*Minutes and Resolves of the Trustees of St. Peter's Church Respecting the Building of St. Patrick's Church in the City of New York*.

<sup>71</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>72</sup>He was present in the yellow fever period of 1795. Most accounts place him as having come to this country about 1798, yet the letter of O'Brien to Carroll, April 14, 1796 places him in New York in 1795; cf. McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 46. DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 352.

<sup>73</sup>Letter to Carroll, Westchester, October 1, 1805 in Baltimore Cathedral Archives and reprinted in the *Catholic News*, November 5, 1910. Father Sibourd was then at the country house of Dominick Lynch at Clason Point where the yellow fever confined him. In this letter he spoke of his intention to leave within a month for Martinique.

<sup>74</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 628.

<sup>75</sup>Made last entry in baptismal register on November 1.

<sup>76</sup>White, *op. cit.*, 204.

<sup>77</sup>DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 352.

## CHAPTER VI

PASTORATES OF ANTHONY KOHLMANN, S.J., V.G. (1808-1815);  
AND BENEDICT FENWICK, S.J. (1815-1817)

The ecclesiastical jurisdiction granted to Bishop Carroll by the Bull creating the See of Baltimore embraced the whole territory of the United States. The newly chosen Bishop early realized the physical impossibility of laboring in such an immense diocese and at his suggestion the Synod of 1791 agreed to petition for the appointment of a coadjutor. Bishop Carroll desired either this arrangement or the creation of a new See at New York or Philadelphia, the latter city being preferred by him for its more vigorous Catholic development. The Congregation of Propaganda Fide decided in 1792 on appointing Father Lorenz Grässel of Philadelphia as coadjutor but before he could be consecrated he died of yellow fever. He was the first German-born to be appointed a Bishop in the United States. His successor in 1795 was Father Leonard Neale. The latter was the first Bishop consecrated in the United States (December 7, 1800). Bishop Neale remained, however, as President of Georgetown College and took little part in the administrative work of the immense diocese.

For this and other reasons, Carroll urged as early as 1802 the creation of new sees. With the acquisition of Louisiana in 1803 by the United States, the Diocese of Baltimore became co-terminus with the new boundaries of the country, and the burden became correspondingly greater. Finally, Carroll recommended the creation of four new sees, to be located at Boston, Philadelphia, New York and a fourth in Kentucky. Upon invitation by Propaganda, he further recommended nominees for three of these dioceses but suggested that the new See of New York remain unfilled. He felt that the Church in that State should be left to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Boston, "for among the priests there seems none fit to be entrusted with the episcopate and therefore I refrain from recommending anyone to so grave a post."<sup>1</sup>

Again, in a letter to Father Strickland, on December 3, 1808, he

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said: "Amongst the clergy resident in N. York, when my letters went to Rome, there was no one here, whom I ventured to recommend for the Episcopacy, and suggested the propriety of leaving the Diocese subject for sometime to the Bishop of Boston. . . "2

On April 8, 1808, Pope Pius VII signed the Bulls dividing the See of Baltimore and erecting the new Sees of New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Bardstown. Not accepting Carroll's recommendation that New York remain *sede vacante*, the Pope appointed Father Richard Luke Concanen. He was an Irish Dominican, resident for many years in Rome as the agent of the Irish bishops, and also the American clergy (1792-1808). In the absence of any recommendation for the post by Bishop Carroll, Doctor Concanen was the personal choice of the Holy Father himself. In a letter which Propaganda sent to the latter (May 24, 1808) Doctor Concanen is spoken of as

a man whom long experience and the high esteem of all Rome prove to be most worthy of so exalted a dignity, and whom Your Grace has time and again shown to be very dear to yourself—Richard Luke Concanen, of the Order of Saint Dominic, and one of the theologians of the Casanate.<sup>3</sup>

Father Concanen had ten years previously rejected an Irish bishopric, "resolving to live and die in the obscure and retired way of life I have chosen from my youth."<sup>4</sup>

Declining a similar honor in 1802, he even now (in 1808) preferred a fellow Dominican, John Connolly, in preference to himself.<sup>5</sup> Just recovering from a serious illness, he was still confined to his bed when Cardinal di Pietro induced him, in the name of the Pope, to accept the charge. He was accordingly consecrated on April 24, 1808. The pallium for Archbishop Carroll and the Bulls erecting the new bishoprics were given to his care, and in June he arrived in Leghorn, where he was to embark for New York. The French, however, had sequestered all American vessels in the port. After four months of waiting, he left his baggage and also the Bulls and documents with the Filicchis with instructions to send them at the first opportunity to Doctor Carroll. He then returned to Rome where he engaged himself in episcopal functions, made necessary as a result of the exile of the papal court by

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Napoleon. In the autumn of 1809, he had duplicate copies of the American documents made and sent to Paris,<sup>6</sup> and it was from these duplicates that Carroll proceeded with the consecrations of the three other suffragans.

Doctor Concanen, realizing that his arrival in New York would be uncertain, empowered Archbishop Carroll (on July 23, 1808) to appoint a vicar general "with all the necessary powers you and I can delegate to him."<sup>7</sup> For this position Doctor Carroll made an excellent choice by appointing a learned and able Jesuit, Father Anthony Kohlmann, who was to act as administrator and pastor of St. Peter's until the arrival of Bishop Concanen.

Father Kohlmann was a German, born in Kaysersburg, Alsace, on June 13, 1771. After having attended the college at Freiburg, Switzerland, he was ordained priest at the completion of his theological studies. Once a Capuchin, he joined the Congregation of the Fathers of the Sacred Heart. After laboring for two years in Italy and Austria, he became the director of an ecclesiastical seminary at Dillingen, Bavaria. From here, he went to Berlin and then to Amsterdam to direct a college established by the Fathers of the Faith of Jesus, with whom his Congregation had united (1799). He subsequently became a member of the Russian Society of Jesus, which was recognized by Pope Pius VII in 1801. He entered the novitiate at Dunébourg on June 21, 1803 and a year later came to the United States where he was sent to Georgetown as an assistant to the master of novices. While here he also engaged in missionary work throughout Pennsylvania and Maryland.<sup>8</sup>

Father Kohlmann spoke English, German, and French fluently and was an especially good choice for the New York position in view of an appeal which the Germans of that city made to Archbishop Carroll in March, 1808:

Many of us do not know any English at all, and Those who have some knowledge of it are not well enough versed in the English Language to attend Divine Service with any utility to themselves. As we have not yet a place of worship of our own, we have made application to the Trustees of the English Catholic Church in this City to grant us permission to perform our worship in the German Language in their



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church at such times as not to interfere with their regular services. This permission they have very readily granted us. During the course of this year we shall take care to find an opportunity to provide ourselves with a Suitable building of our own, for we have no doubt that our number will soon considerably increase. We leave it entirely to your Reverence to choose for us a Man, who is capable of taking upon Him our spiritual Concerns, and instruct us in our holy religion, and we humbly beg to Grant our Prayers as soon as it is possible for your Reverence.<sup>9</sup>

Undoubtedly, Doctor Carroll considered this petition in his selection of Father Kohlmann who brought along with him his fellow Jesuits, Father Benedict Fenwick, and four scholastics, James Wallace, Michael White, James Redmond, and Adam Marshall. He arrived in the city in October 1808,<sup>10</sup> and shortly after wrote this picture of the New York situation:

The Congregation chiefly consists of Irish, some hundreds of French & as many Germans, in all according to the common estimation, of 14,000 souls. Rev. Mr. Fenwick a young father of our Society distinguished for his learning & piety has been sent along with me. I was no sooner arrived in this city, &, behold the Trustees though before our arrival they had not spent a cent for the reparation & furniture of their Clergyman's house, laid out for the soul [sic] purpose above \$800. All seem to revive at the very name of the Society though yet little known in this part of the country. The scandals given in this Congtion [Congregation] as almost every where else by the Clergymen have brought it very near its ruin. Our immediate predecessors though respectable in every regard could not prevent its speedy decay. Almighty God seems to have permitted this to furnish the Society with an opportunity of diffusing the good odour of it & of disposing the minds to favour its establishment. May we be so happy as to produce these desirable effects upon the public mind!

I have brought along with me 4 young Masters of our Society to erect a college in this city, & with the divine assistance I hope we shall succeed. We live all together in the same house observing our religious discipline as much as it is consistent with our present situation.<sup>11</sup>

About three months later, in a letter to Father Grassi, Kohlmann remarked:

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The communion-rail daily filled, though deserted before; general confessions every day (for the majority of this immense parish are natives of Ireland, many of whom have never seen the face of a priest since their arrival in the country); three sermons, in English, French, and German, every Sunday, instead of the single one in English; three Catechism classes every Sunday, instead of one; Protestants every day instructed and received into the Church; sick persons attended with cheerfulness at the first call, and ordinarily such as stand in great need of instruction and general confessions; application made at all houses to raise a subscription for the relief of the poor, by which means three thousand dollars have been collected, to be paid constantly every year.<sup>12</sup>

Such a decided improvement in the active life of the parish found St. Peter's inadequate to accommodate so vast a congregation. Furthermore, New York had been raised to the dignity of an Episcopal See, and many Catholics desired the erection of a new church which might serve as the cathedral of their new Bishop.<sup>13</sup> Under the leadership of Father Kohlmann it was decided to erect the Cathedral of St. Patrick, to be located in the suburban section of the city.

About this time, the inhabitants of New York City aggregated over 60,000. Urban development tended along the eastern part of the island. The foreign trade was concentrated there along the bank of the East River; the wholesale domestic trade was in the vicinity of Pearl and Broad Streets and around Hanover Square; while William Street between Fulton and Wall was the location of the retail trade. Nassau and upper Pearl Streets were dotted with fashionable residences as was lower Broadway and the Battery. Broadway extended up and out of the main part of the town and met the Bowery at Union Square. The northern limit of the town proper was Canal Street, which was in reality a drain cut through a marsh to the North River to serve as an outlet for the Collect. The Collect was a pond that prevented uniform development of the town northward, and was then gradually being filled in from the adjacent hills.<sup>14</sup> The cornerstone of the new City Hall had been laid a few years before on the Common, popularly known as the "Flat," in the vicinity of St. Peter's.

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On the far east end of the city, the Trustees of St. Peter's had purchased a site for the Catholic burial ground. In 1801, nine lots on the northwestern corner of Prince and Mott Streets were secured while two years later, ten more lots in the rear of these were added.<sup>15</sup> Some of the earliest tombstones of Old St. Patrick's are dated 1801, showing that the plot was used soon after acquisition.

It was on this site, between Broadway and the Bowery, "amid woodland hills and meadows," that it was decided to erect the new cathedral. Mulberry Street at that time was surrounded by woods and so far from the immediate city limits that a fox was caught in the church yard as late as 1820!<sup>16</sup>

The first action taken by the trustees in the speedy construction of the new edifice was to order the removal to other ground "with all possible Care, Decency, and Expedition, such Graves as would be incommoded thereby, and have their Contents deposited in fresh Graves,—with the assistance of the Revd. Mr. Kohlman, —and the Relatives invited to attend if they pleased."<sup>17</sup>

The building was to be 120 feet in length by 80 in width. The cornerstone was to contain the inscription:

ANNO DOMINI—1809  
DEDICATED TO ST. PATRICK  
APOSTLE OF IRELAND<sup>18</sup>

The ceremony occurred on Thursday, June 8, 1809, with Father Kohlmann officiating in the capacity of Vicar General of the Diocese. The rector, assistant clergy, choir and Board of Trustees walked in solemn procession to the ground, the cornerstone was laid, and a suitable discourse was given to more than 3000 people who attended the ceremony.<sup>19</sup>

Father Kohlmann and his confrères worked diligently and successfully. A month later he was able to say that the church was more crowded at the 6 o'clock Mass than it was at the last Mass of 11 o'clock a year previously; that there were as many communicants every Sunday as there had been formerly at Easter; and that Confessions were almost all general ones that brought back many who "for these ten, twenty, forty, sixty years", neglected this duty.<sup>20</sup>



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Even with this revived and increased spiritual activity of the parish, the trustees, indeed, assumed a courageous burden in undertaking the construction of a cathedral; for in the year 1808 the commercial metropolis had "the life temporarily knocked out of it by President Jefferson's Embargo Act." When the cornerstone was laid, the embargo had already been in effect for about five months. By April 1808, 120 failures among merchants and traders had taken place, with a loss of over \$5,000,000; there were in the harbor more than 500 vessels rotting for want of employment. Sailors were destitute; merchants shut up their counting-houses and discharged their clerks; and even the farmers refrained from cultivating their land because they received only one fourth of the value of the produce they brought to market.<sup>21</sup>

In the construction of the Cathedral, therefore, it was felt that all unnecessary expense should be avoided.

And that every contributor may be convinced, that the Trustees do not Covert, or will they permit unnecessary expenses to be expended, to prevent the covering in of the Church, It is agreed upon, after deliberation of the considerable Expence which the raising of a Steeple would amount to, and thereby prevent the finishing of the Church, by an unnecessary and useless appendage neither adopted by the resent Roman Catholic Church built in Philadelphia or in those of other Religious denominations in this City, to recede from any Idea, which to the prejudice of Contrabutions has been held out,—of making a costly foundation for the Erecting at a future period, a steeple to St. Patricks Church, thereby procrastinating the building absorbing the funds, which may otherwise compleat the Church, for the only end proposed of hearing Divine Service, in same with greater expidition. . . .<sup>22</sup>

A unique method was devised for raising a fund for the completion of the cathedral. A Patrician Society was organized and methods similar to those used by Father O'Leary in the construction of St. Patrick's Church in London were adopted. Every Catholic was invited to contribute a monthly stipend ranging in amounts of one quarter of a dollar and upward, according to one's means and inclination, towards the completion of the edifice.<sup>23</sup>

This scheme did not have the immediate success anticipated



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and on October 1, 1810, the trustees felt compelled to appeal to a friend who had helped them in the past—the Corporation of Trinity Church. Stating that they had no other resources left and

confident of your generosity from the pleasing remembrance of former favours conferred on them by the worthy members composing your Corporation, acquainted with your resources and relying upon your Charity which has been so frequently and so conspicuously exerted in behalf of others under somewhat similar circumstances, they take the liberty once more to solicit in a particular manner your kind aid and humbly request a further extension of your benevolence. . . .

They beg leave also to assure you that they feel the greatest happiness in experiencing that the former expression of your liberality and good will towards St. Peter's Church, for which the Trustees offer their sincere acknowledgments, has contributed not a little to promote that harmony and concord which at present subsist between them and the Congregation with which you are united, and which it will be ever their earnest wish and desire to cherish and maintain.<sup>24</sup>

Trinity Church, however, rejected the appeal since "the Situation of our own Churches in Communion with it [Trinity] create an Impossibility of Complying with their request."<sup>25</sup>

Lack of funds was not the only cause of the retardation of the cathedral, for the sudden death of Bishop Concanen came to the Catholics of New York as a distinct shock. He had left Rome in the Spring of 1810 for Naples, where it was intended that he embark for America. With the help of the American consul and the Filicchi brothers, passage was secured on the ship *Frances of Salem*. At the last moment, difficulties developed. The Captain would not allow the companion priests of Doctor Concanen aboard; the French, who were in control of Naples detained him as a British subject and the police, dissatisfied with his passport, ordered him not to embark until his papers were in satisfactory condition. The ship sailed without him and, disheartened by the experience, the Bishop exclaimed: "I may bid farewell to America forever. I pray you, my dear abbé, to see that whatever regards

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my funeral and burial be done in a decent manner, so as not to disgrace my rank and character.”<sup>26</sup>

That night he was taken ill with a violent fever, received the Last Sacraments the next day, died and was buried in the church of San Domenico Maggiore on June 19.

News of the death did not reach New York for several months, when Father Kohlmann immediately celebrated a solemn Requiem in St. Peter's Church on the first Sunday in October. An account of the service was sent by him to Archbishop Carroll:

The sanctuary, the whole altar, all the curtains were in black. The bier elegantly fixed, covered & surrounded with all the badges of Episcopal Dignity, such as the mitre, crosier, &c. a high Mass with deacon & subdeacon, accompanied with musical instruments, celebrated, and a sermon on the episcopal dignity delivered by Reverend Mr. Fenwick to an audience so numerous as has scarce ever been seen before in any church. . . .

Among other reasons which induced us to perform the funeral service contrary to the usage of the church on a Sunday was the following: our intention was to render that ceremony as solemn and striking as possible, in order to impress the minds both of Catholics & Protestants with that high Veneration, which the Catholic Church bears to the Episcopal Dignity. Now we know from experience that in a congregation like this, composed chiefly of labouring or trading people, but few would have attended the service if it had been fixed on a week day, nay a great portion of them I dare say, would never have taken notice of there having ever been appointed a Bishop for New York. We considered, therefore, that the solemn Mass being *pro die obitus*, the remains of the venerable Prelate might be deemed morally present, and consequently for the greater edification of his distressed flock his obsequies might be fixed on a Sunday. If these observations are not found to be adequate to justify in some measure our deviating from the Rubrics of the Church on such an extraordinary occasion, this fault must be added to those many, to which I am conscious, alas, to be too subject. . . . The Almighty, however, was pleased to draw good from evil, for I am informed that no solemnity performed in our church made ever so blessed . . . on all those who were present, as that of the said funeral service.<sup>27</sup>

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The war between England and the United States further complicated the project of completing the new church. The financial difficulties, the death of Bishop Concanen, the hard times produced by the war and the stoppage of emigration to this country all tended to check the completion of the cathedral.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, Father Kohlmann lent his efforts to the development of the classical school which had been established shortly after his arrival in New York. It was begun in a rented house on Mulberry Street, fronting the ground on which the new cathedral was being built, but in order to obtain more convenient accommodations, it was moved shortly afterwards to Broadway. By Christmas of 1808, Father Kohlmann already had seventeen pupils. In April 1809, he saw in New York the finest prospect for the Society of Jesus:

I am persuaded that in a few years we would have a regular College in this City if we had teachers enough: this congregation is too excessive for two Priests. I wish particularly to have two priests more, one to assist us in the ministry, that either he or I may have time enough to give lessons in Philosophy or Divinity to our Masters & the other to be the Rector of the Church we are going to build, because, I think, it would be much better, if we were not to be mixed with Secular priests. Rd. Mr. Fenwick my worthy & able companion would attend the new church, if I had some other assistant. R. Father Cossack & Grassi would be very useful in this city, could they be directed hither, & especially if there be no prospect of their pursuing their first destination. Our school is in a prosperous way, we have none but day scholars, their number will be at least 40 next May. If RR. Fr. F. Cossack & Grassi be sent hither, let them not forget to take along with themselves their Mathematical & Astronomical Instrument & their books. Among our four masters here, there is an excellent Master of Mathematics & Astronomy.<sup>29</sup>

For a while, a cloud was thrown over the success of the New York Literary Institution by the mutual misunderstanding between Bishop Concanen and Father Kohlmann. In 1809 Bishop Concanen entertained the view of establishing a college and seminary at New York. For this purpose he intended to take along with him two young Franciscans.<sup>30</sup> When he heard that Father



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Kohlmann had already established an Academy there, he was indignant that that step should have been taken after his appointment,<sup>30a</sup> because he had planned to use the profits of his Academy for the support of clerical aspirants. However, the misunderstanding, was short-lived, for when Doctor Carroll informed him that the Literary Institution was "erected . . . before he [Carroll] heard of my appointment to that See" Concanen explained that had he known of the existence of the new Academy at New York, he "probably would not have engaged the two young Franciscans to accompany" him.<sup>31</sup>

The Literary Institution continued to grow, and by January 1810, it had fifty scholars on its register.<sup>32</sup> Now through the efforts of Andrew Morris and Cornelius Heeney, a new site was purchased in March 1810, for \$13,000, the title to which remained with the two trustees.<sup>33</sup> They chose a place directly opposite the Elgin Botanic Garden on a "block of ground now made into two blocks by the opening of Madison Avenue, which lay between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, Fiftieth and Fifty-first Streets."<sup>34</sup> An excellent location, far out into the country, the College was located in:

The most delightful & most healthy spot of the whole Island, at a distance of 4 small miles from the city, & of half a mile from the East & North rivers, both which are seen from the house, situated besides between two roads, which are very much frequented, opposite to the Botanic Gardens, which belong to the State. It has adjacent to it a beautiful lawn, garden, orchard, etc.<sup>35</sup>

Father Fenwick remained at St. Peter's until July 1810, when he went to live at the College as President. The school continued to develop. About August 1810, a public examination was held after having been advertised in the newspapers. Premiums were distributed, speeches were delivered "all of which gave great satisfaction to the respectable audience of ladies and gentlemen who attended on the occasion."<sup>36</sup> Father Kohlmann had reason to feel that if the reputation of the house were kept up, the College would rival that of any in the country. The predominant location of the city as a commercial seaport would encourage the



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people of the West Indies to send their children to New York in preference to other places. The authorities of Columbia College had for the past two years invited the Jesuit Fathers to attend commencement exercises. And the faculty of the Literary Institution, although small, was composed of men of exceptional scholarship, particularly the Reverend James Wallace who was one of the best mathematicians and astronomers in the United States. The school was patronized by Protestants and Catholics alike. Among the scholars were the son of the late Governor Livingston and the son of the then Governor Tompkins.<sup>37</sup>

By 1813 there were seventy-four boarding students at the Literary Institution. Yet in view of this promising development of a Jesuit College in New York, in the summer of 1813, Father Grassi, Superior of the Maryland Mission, ordered the institution closed and the faculty to return to Maryland. He did this because there were not enough Jesuit Fathers to attend both colleges. It was a question either of keeping up Georgetown, or the Literary Institution, and the latter was sacrificed to the needs of the former. Father Kohlmann, who in August of 1808 wrote Bishop Carroll that he was destined for teaching philosophy at Georgetown, and that it would be injurious to that institution to go to New York where the Bishop wished to employ him, soon after his arrival saw the superiority of New York as a foundation of the Society.<sup>38</sup> Father Grassi, however, realizing his difference of opinion with Kohlmann, wrote the latter that the lack of members in the Society was the reason for giving up the Literary Institute, and that if he "could succeed to make such arrangements as to keep it up, as a thing connected to the mission, or to the congregation (provided the Society had nothing to do with it)" he [Grassi] would be very glad.<sup>39</sup>

Again, he wrote that the college was an *onus insupportabile* for the Jesuits at that time and would be for several years to come.<sup>40</sup> Thus the Literary Institution had ceased to exist.

In September, 1813, the building was loaned to a body of Trappist monks, headed by Dom Augustine who found in New York a refuge from the war-torn empire of Napoleon. They opened an orphan asylum in which thirty children were sheltered

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and trained, and lent their assistance to the Catholics of New York.<sup>41</sup>

Not far from the asylum, and situated near Third Avenue and Fiftieth Street, was a convent of Ursuline nuns, who had come upon the invitation of Father Kohlmann from the Blackrock convent at Cork. Arriving in 1812, they soon after opened an academy and poor-school; and in 1814 secured a charter of incorporation from the Legislature. The Ursulines came to America on the condition that if in three years their establishment did not secure a certain number of novices, they would return to Ireland.<sup>42</sup> Stephen Jumel, the famous New York merchant, who at the time was a trustee of St. Peter's, was "the chief promoter of this most useful institution; he generously purchased the elegant country seat destined for this establishment."<sup>43</sup> The Sisters, however, soon learned that he expected to be paid two-thirds of its value, which was \$3000.

Among the priests who served at St. Peter's during the time of Father Kohlmann either regularly or occasionally may be mentioned Father Viannay (1809); Father Nicholas Zocchi (June, 1810); Reverend C. Wouters (1810-1814), who after 1812 wrote his name in the baptismal register as Wouters. Father Adam Marshall, S.J., who came in 1809 as one of the four scholastics sent to teach at the College, and who was ordained in 1811 by Bishop Neale in Georgetown, was sent back to New York where he assisted at the College and ministered to the Catholics in the outlying district. Father Peter Malou, S.J., who was sent to the College in 1812, registers a few times to the end of 1814 as Mallou. From January 1815 on, his entries in the Baptismal Register were frequent. Father Paul Kohlmann, S.J., a brother of the rector, remained at St. Peter's from December 1811 to July 1814. Father Francis Malevé (1814-1815) and Father Peter P. Ladavière, S.J. (1814), among others, also assisted for a short time at St. Peter's.

Fathers Anthony Kohlmann and Fenwick were not at St. Peter's long before they were called in attendance upon the death bed of Thomas Paine, the free thinker.

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A recent account of the death of Thomas Paine contained the following, "Just before he died in 1809, two clergymen gained access to his room. To their questions concerning his religious opinions, Paine simply said 'Let me alone; good morning.'"<sup>44</sup>

Vale, in his *Life of Thomas Paine*, mentioned these clergymen by name in his description of the scene:

That among the most prominent and zealous visitors of Mr. Paine, in his last days, were the Rev. Mr. Milledollar, a Presby. clergyman, and the Rev. Mr. Cunningham. About a fortnight before Mr. Paine's death, this latter gentleman told Paine that they visited him as friends & neighbors.

That Mr. Milledollar attempted to address him (Paine), but was interrupted by Paine and when they were gone, he said to Mrs. Hedden, his housekeeper "Don't let them come here again, they trouble me." In spite of Mr. Paine's declaration these gentlemen again attempted to obtrude themselves upon him, but were refused admittance, as directed, by Mrs. Hedden, who piously added: "If God does not change his mind, she was sure no human power could."<sup>45</sup>

The testimony of Amassa Woodsworth, who visited Paine every day for six weeks before his death and who sat up with him on the last two nights of his life, as told to Mrs. Maria Thompson, a neighbor, gives further interesting details:

I inquired of Mr. Woodsworth, whether Thos Paine contd in his belief of the doctrines advocated in his "Age of Reason;" he replied, that Thos Paine did not recant, and that he (Paine) declined speaking upon that subject. I informed him of the rumor that Thos Paine's friends & disciples, who had charge of him during his last sickness, had refused admittance to some clergyman and others who desired to see & converse w. him; he replied, that some meddlesome persons, taking advantage of his supposed debility of mind, as well as body, called to see him, and they were very properly refused admittance.<sup>46</sup>

A short time before Paine died, however, Father Fenwick of St. Peter's was sent for by him. Paine was prompted to this by a poor Catholic woman who went to see him in his illness and who told him that if anybody could do him good it would be a Catholic priest. This woman (formerly a Quakeress) was herself a recent



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convert of Father Fenwick. Feeling inexperienced in the ministry at the time (he had been ordained only less than a year) Fenwick asked Father Kohlmann to accompany him. Arriving at the lodging, they met the housekeeper who inquired whether they were Catholic priests; "for," said she, "Mr. Paine has been so much annoyed of late by ministers of different other denominations calling upon him, that he has left express orders with me to admit no one today but the clergymen of the Catholic Church."<sup>47</sup>

While waiting for Paine to awaken, she, although a Protestant, expressed the wish that they might succeed with Mr. Paine:

for he is laboring under great distress of mind ever since he was informed by his physicians that he can not possibly live, and must die shortly. He sent for you to-day, because he was told that if anyone could do him good you might. Possibly he may think that you know of some remedy, which his physicians are ignorant of. He is truly to be pitied. His cries, when he is left alone, are heart-rending. *O Lord help me!* he will exclaim during his paroxysms of distress, *God help me! Jesus Christ help me!* repeating the same expressions without any, the least variation, in a tone of voice that would alarm the house. Sometimes he will say: *O God! what have I done to suffer so much!* Then shortly after: *But there is no God!* And again, a little after: *Yet if there should be, what will become of me hereafter?* Thus he will continue for some time, when on a sudden he will, scream as if in terror and agony, and call out for me by name. On one of these occasions, which are very frequent, I went to him, and inquired what he wanted? *Stay with me,* he replied, *for God's sake: for I cannot bear to be left alone.* I then observed that I could not always be with him, as I had much to attend to in the house. *Then, said he, send even a child to stay with me; for it is a hell to be alone.* I never saw a more unhappy—a more forsaken man; it seems he can not reconcile himself to die.<sup>48</sup>

At length, entering Paine's room, they announced their identity and their coming on his invitation. Paine made no reply. Father Kohlmann, realizing that Paine had been in France, and that he himself could express himself better in that tongue than English, began to speak in French when Paine interrupted with "speak English, man, speak English." Father Kohlmann informed him



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that he had read his *Age of Reason* as well as his other writing's against Christianity

and I am at a loss to imagine how a man of your good sense could have employed his talents in attempting to undermine what, to say nothing of its divine establishment, the wisdom of ages has deemed most conducive to the happiness of man. The Christian religion, sir—

"That's enough, sir, that's enough," said Paine, again interrupting him; "I see what you would be about—I wish to hear no more from you, sir. My mind is made up on that subject. I look upon the whole of the Christian scheme to be a tissue of absurdities and lies, and J. C. to be nothing more than a cunning knave and an imposter."<sup>49</sup>

Father Kohlmann attempted to speak again but Paine ordered him to be silent. "I have told you already that I wish to hear nothing more from you." Then Father Fenwick, realizing that his confrère had failed in making an impression attempted to approach a proof of the existence of God from natural reason; but Paine would hear nothing from him. "I see your object, gentlemen, is to trouble me; I wish you to leave the room." Father Fenwick assured him that they had no other motive than to do him good and that they "had been given to understand that you wished to see us, and we are come accordingly: because it is a principle with us never to refuse our services to a dying man asking for them. But for this, we should not have come, for we never obtrude upon any individual."<sup>51</sup>

Paine, on hearing this, seemed to relax a little and in a milder tone replied: "You can do me no good now—it is too late. I have tried different physicians, and their remedies have all failed. I have nothing now to expect . . . but a speedy dissolution. My physicians have, indeed, told me as much."<sup>52</sup>

Father Fenwick, feeling Paine had misunderstood the nature of their call, told him that they could not prescribe any remedies for his bodily complaints, but that they had come to offer their ministry for the good of his immortal soul: "which is in great danger of being forever cast off by the Almighty, on account of your sins; and especially for the crime of having vilified and rejected his word, and uttered blasphemies against his Son."<sup>53</sup>

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Paine on hearing this was roused into a fury; "he gritted his teeth, twisted and turned himself several times in his bed, uttering all the while the bitterest imprecations . . . for he conducted himself more like a mad man than a rational creature."<sup>54</sup>

Paine ordered them to leave: "Away with you, and your God too; . . . all that you have uttered are lies—filthy lies; and if I had a little more time, I would prove it, as I did about your imposter, Jesus Christ."<sup>55</sup> After an earnest attempt to pacify him they withdrew from the room, realizing that they could do nothing for the unfortunate man.

There would be no need for dwelling upon this melancholy incident if the authenticity of the account had not been questioned. A recent biographer of Paine has disposed of Bishop Fenwick's account in this manner: "Thirty-five years after his death a Catholic bishop published in the *Catholic Magazine* what purported to be a story of the awful deathbed scene by an eyewitness. Like a rolling snowball, the Paine legend gathered volume."<sup>56</sup>

It would seem that thirty-five years after an event is a rather long interval before the publication of such a story. Yet the characterizations of Miss Best as "what purported to be" and "the Paine legend" are strong in view of her failure to produce any source for substantiating her assumption. That the incident was common knowledge among the Jesuit missionaries in the United States is evident from the Relation in 1818 of Father Grassi, who until 1817 was Superior of the American Jesuits, when he left for Rome. In his account of the condition of religion in America in 1818 he made the following comment relative to Paine:

The Catholic Religion is better appreciated and more widely spread in America than many may suppose. However rude and ignorant a person may be, when mention is made of the Catholic Church, he willingly grants that it is the earliest of all; and many non-Catholics prefer to communicate their religious doubts to a Catholic, simply because he professes the faith which is the first and oldest. Our missionaries are generally respected, either on account of their education and superior knowledge, or of their celibacy, or of their disinterested and zealous labors, or, finally, because of the un-

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doubted validity of their ordination. It is a noteworthy fact that when the impious Thomas Paine was on his death-bed, he gave positive orders that no Protestant minister should be admitted to his chamber, but he allowed two Jesuit priests to be called. They came and spoke with him; it seems that now and then he paid some attention to the truths which they suggested to him, but the acute pains which tormented him caused him to break out in blasphemies and howls of despair. The Fathers, having failed to accomplish anything, withdrew in horror, and the infidel died as he had lived. Paine was an Englishman, who had been a corsetmaker before he undertook to write upon religion. His principal work, *The Age of Reason* is remarkable only for the unbridled fury with which it speaks against revelation.<sup>57</sup>

Grassi also gives some further information about the Quakeress, to whom Fenwick referred:

A Quakeress, one of the most distinguished, and so to speak, the spiritual mistress of her sect, upon hearing that there were Catholic priests in New York, and Jesuits too at that, was fired with zeal, and took the resolution to go and convert those whom prejudice made her believe to be the worst abomination of antichrist. She soon found them, and began right away to talk such outrageous nonsense, that one of the missionaries thought it best to leave the room. The other better acquainted with the customs of his country, listened to her with patience replied with politeness, did not lose his temper when interrupted, and having to some extent calmed down her fury, rendered her attentive and docile to his discourse. God blessed this conversation and others which were held upon the subject of religion, she was disabused of her false notions, and finally recognized the truth and embraced it.<sup>58</sup>

In 1813 Father Kohlmann was the principal figure in the famous trial concerning the secrecy of the confessional. The case, important as it was, arose out of a trivial occasion. A Catholic merchant named James Keating caused the arrest in March 1813 of one Philips and his wife on a charge of receiving goods stolen from him by two colored thieves. Before the trial took place, restitution was made and Keating was reluctant to press the charge. Upon the police threatening him with commit-



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ment unless he divulged from whom he received back his goods, he mentioned that he had received them from his pastor, Father Kohlmann of St. Peter's. Thereupon, a summons was issued to Kohlmann who immediately appeared at the police office. Upon being asked to divulge who gave him the goods, he declined to answer on the ground that knowledge of the thieves had come to him through the confessional. The case was then sent to the Grand Jury, but again Kohlmann respectfully refused to answer on the same ground. When Philips and his wife were brought up for trial, the priest was summoned for a third time as a witness for the prosecution, and a third time he refused to answer questions giving at great length his reasons and setting forth the doctrine of the Church in the case. With the consent of counsel the case was put off for some time, in order to give opportunity to examine the point involved carefully.

In the meantime, public attention had been attracted, a great crowd attended court and heard the priest's explanations of his position; several ministers raised a hue and cry over his conduct, and signs of religious dissension began to multiply. The district attorney, Mr. Gardinier, was a fair-minded man, who, reluctant that such a trivial offense should disturb the repose of a "respectable religious sect," was willing to enter a *nolle prosequi* in the case. The Trustees of St. Peter's, however, felt that the question should be settled then, since the point would undoubtedly arise again. On April 19, 1813 they adopted a resolution respectfully requesting the district attorney to bring the matter to trial at the next sitting of the court.<sup>59</sup>

Father Kohlmann stated his position to the Court in a clear and vigorous manner:

Were I summoned to give evidence as a private individual (in which capacity I declare most solemnly, I know nothing relatively to the case before the court) and to testify from those ordinary sources of information from which the witnesses have derived theirs, I should not for a moment hesitate, and should even deem it a duty of conscience to declare whatever knowledge I might have; as, it cannot but be in the recollection of this same honorable Court, I did not long since, on a different occasion, because my holy religion



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teaches and commands me to be subject to the higher powers in civil matters, and to respect and obey them. But if called upon to testify in quality of a minister of a sacrament, in which my God himself has enjoined on me a perpetual and inviolable secrecy, I must declare to this honorable Court, that I cannot, I must not answer any question that has a bearing upon the restitution in question; and that it would be my duty to prefer instantaneous death or any temporal misfortune, rather than disclose the name of the penitent in question. For, were I to act otherwise, I should become a traitor to my Church, to my sacred ministry and to my God. In fine, I should render myself guilty of eternal damnation. . . .

The question now before the Court is this: Whether a Roman Catholic Priest can in any case be justifiable in revealing the secrets of sacramental confession? I say, he cannot: the reason whereof must be obvious to every one acquainted with the tenets of the Catholic Church respecting the Sacraments.<sup>60</sup>

He then explained the tenets of the Church and the infamy that would attach to him if he violated them.

The point was argued on June 8, 1813 before the Court of General Sessions, presided over by Mayor DeWitt Clinton. Mr. Gardinier, for the State held that the privilege claimed by the priest was not recognized either by the common law or the Constitution of the State; that the latter at the time of its making was adopted by a "Christian, Protestant People;"<sup>61</sup> and that although the Constitution granted religious "profession and worship" to all denominations, "without discrimination or preference," it had not granted exemption from previous legal duties or intended that any one sect should be *superior* to another.<sup>62</sup>

Messrs. Riker and Sampson, for the defendant, reviewed the English and Irish statutes which denied to a priest such immunity; and they contended that the barbarous penal legislation of Ireland should not be looked upon for precedent in this country where freedom of religion was enjoyed. Furthermore, they showed that under Article 38 of the State Constitution every principle of any religious denomination was protected, provided it did not lead to disorder; and they urged the broad protection

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of the Constitution as a sufficient and ample reason in behalf of the contention of the priest.

The decision of the Court was rendered on June 14, 1813. In a unanimous opinion they accepted the explanation of Father Kohlmann as to the laws of the Church on confessional secrecy and the odium that would attach to him for a violation thereof:

There can be no doubt but that the witness does consider, that his answering on this occasion, would be such a high handed offence against religion, that it would expose him to punishment in a future state—and it must be conceded by all, that it would subject him to privations and disgrace in this world. It is true, that he would not be obnoxious to criminal punishment, but the reason why he is excused where he would be liable to such punishment, applies with greater force to this case, where his sufferings would be aggravated by the compunctious visitings of a wounded conscience, and the gloomy perspective of a dreadful *hereafter*; although he would not lose an estate, or compromise a civil right, yet he would be deprived of his only means of support and subsistence—and although he would not confess a crime, or acknowledge his infamy, yet he would act an offence against high heaven, and seal his disgrace in the presence of his assembled friends, and to the affliction of a bereaved church and a weeping congregation.

It cannot therefore, for a moment be believed, that the mild and just principles of the common Law would place the witness in such a dreadful predicament; in such a horrible dilemma, between perjury and false swearing: If he tells the truth he violates his ecclesiastical oath—If he prevaricates he violates his judicial oath—Whether he lies, or whether he testifies the truth he is wicked, and it is impossible for him to act without acting against the laws of rectitude and the light of conscience.

The only course is, for the court to declare that he shall not testify or act at all. . . .<sup>63</sup>

We speak of this question, not in a theological sense, but in its legal and constitutional bearings. Although we differ from the witness and his brethren, in our religious creed, yet we have no reason to question the purity of their motives, or to impeach their good conduct as citizens. They are protected by the laws and constitution of this country, in the full and free exercise of their religion, and this court can

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never countenance or authorize the application of insult to their faith, or of torture to their consciences.<sup>64</sup>

The sensation that the case created, the wide implications that were involved could not help stir up warm discussion. William Sampson, who was one of the great lawyers of his day, was an Irish Presbyterian refugee of '98. He published a report of the case in 1813 to which was appended "*A True Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church, Touching the Sacrament of Penance, with the Grounds on Which This Doctrine Is Founded*," written by Father Kohlmann.<sup>65</sup> This gave the opportunity to several Protestant writers, among whom was the apostate priest, Charles Wharton, to reply in refutation. Father Kohlmann, however, did not follow up the controversy, depending upon his scholarly treatise to exercise its influence.<sup>66</sup> Wharton was answered by Father Simon F. O'Gallagher from Charleston, S. C., who while in New York published a reply.<sup>67</sup>

Fifteen years later, in 1828, DeWitt Clinton as Governor of New York was instrumental in having enacted into the revised statutes of the State, the following law,—the first of any such enactments in the American States: "No minister of the gospel or priest of any denomination whatsoever, shall be allowed to disclose any confession made to him in his professional character in the course of discipline enjoined by the rules or practice of such denomination."<sup>68</sup>

In the Fall of 1814, two events of utmost importance to the Church in America occurred.

Until 1814, the Society of Jesus had been reestablished in Russia, the Two Sicilies, England, and America. On December 7, 1814 Archbishop Carroll received a copy of the papal Bull restoring the Society in full canonical form throughout the world.<sup>69</sup> This happy news brought joy to every Jesuit in the United States, but not more so than to the loyal members of the Order working at St. Peter's. On December 23, 1814 Father Fenwick wrote his jubilatory congratulations to his Superior, Father John Grassi at Georgetown:

The Society of Jesus is then completely reestablished! That long injured, long insulted Society! That Society which has



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been denounced as the corrupter of youth, the inculcator of unsound, unchristian and lax morality! That Society which has been degraded by the Church herself, rejected by her ministers, outlawed by her Kings, and insulted by her laity! Restored throughout the whole world and restored by a public Bull of the Sovereign Pontiff! . . . What a triumph! How glorious to the Society, how confounding to her enemies! . . .

I embrace, dear Sir, the first leisure moments after the receipt of your letters to forward you my congratulations on the great and glorious tidings you have recently received from Europe—tidings which should exhilarate the heart of every true friend of Christianity and the propagation of the Gospel; tidings peculiarly grateful to this country, and especially to the College of which you are Rector, which will hereafter be able to proceed *secantum regulam & Institutum*. What a revolution must soon take place in your quarter of the United States.<sup>70</sup>

In the previous month, the long widowhood of the New York Church was ended with the consecration in Rome of the Reverend John Connolly, O. P., as Bishop of New York. The ceremony was performed by Caesar Cardinal Brancadero, Archbishop of Fermo, on November 6, 1814, in the Church of SS. Dominic and Sixtus in Monte Magnanapoli.<sup>71</sup> He did not, however, land in New York until November 24, 1815, having waited until the Treaty of Ghent was effective before coming to the United States.<sup>72</sup>

Both of these events had their influence on the parish of St. Peter. Father Kohlmann had been acting as Administrator of the Diocese in the absence of a bishop. As early as September 1813, the General of the Society of Jesus cautiously recommended that Kohlmann resign the office of Vicar General, but Archbishop Carroll was unwilling to see him withdraw.<sup>73</sup> In January 1815, however, Kohlmann was ordered to return to Maryland as Master of Novices. The justification for this course of action is found in a letter of Father Grassi to Bishop Simon Bruté, March 23, 1815, in which Father Kohlmann's Superior at Georgetown declared that the removal was at the determination of the Father General, and further, that Bishop Connolly had committed a



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*bévue* in appointing as Vicar General "*Religiosum filium obedientiae exemptum et his nomin* [?]." Bishop Connolly's nomination of him could not bind Father Kohlmann. Still less, he declared, could Father Kohlmann, *filius obedientiae*, accept without the consent of his superiors "an office which would have fixed him to a place, and not left him to the free disposal of his Superiors." According to Suarez and other theologians, he held that the vicar generalship was a prelacy, the acceptance of which only the Pope could impose upon a Professed member of the Society. He suggested the possibility of Father Kohlmann's being considered, if it was thought proper or necessary, as Vicar General of New York, though absent from the diocese, until an answer was received from Rome, and that, since Father Rantau had been sent to New York to replace him, no harm could result to the diocese.<sup>74</sup>

Father Fenwick, who was left to continue as pastor of St. Peter's, made every effort to complete the cathedral, the progress of which had been retarded. Since no news had been received from Bishop Connolly either by himself or Archbishop Carroll, the dedication was fixed for Ascension Day, May 4, 1815, Bishop Cheverus of Boston having accepted the invitation to dedicate the edifice. The procession to the church included besides the Bishop, officiating clergy and trustees, the Mayor and Alderman of the city, who had accepted the invitation to attend the ceremony.<sup>75</sup> This report appeared in a contemporary newspaper:

The new Catholic Cathedral in this city, which was begun in the year 1809, and lately so far completed as to be fit for divine service, was last Thursday, Ascension Day, solemnly dedicated to God under the name of St. Patrick, by the Right Rev. Dr. Cheverus, Bishop of Boston. This grand and beautiful church, which may justly be considered one of the greatest ornaments of our city, and inferior in point of elegance to none in the United States, is built in the Gothic style and executed agreeable to the design of Mr. Joseph Mangin, the celebrated architect of New York. It is one hundred and twenty feet long, eighty feet wide, and between seventy-five and eighty feet high. The superior elegance of the architecture, as well as the beauty of the interior, had for some months past excited a considerable

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degree of public curiosity, and crowds of citizens of all denominations daily flocked to it to admire its grandeur and magnificence, but on the day of its consecration the concourse was immense. Upwards of four thousand persons, consisting of the best families of New York, including the members of the Corporation, the present (John Ferguson) and former Mayors (De Witt Clinton), with many other officers of distinction, were able to find admittance within, but a far greater number for want of room were compelled reluctantly to remain without. The ceremony of the dedication, with the solemn service of High Mass which followed, was long and impressive.

The Right Rev. Consecrator, after the Gospel of the day was sung, delivered from the altar with his usual sprightly eloquence an appropriate address from the words of the forty-fifth, alias forty-sixth Psalm, eighth verse: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house, and the place where Thy glory dwelleth," to his numerous and attentive audience.<sup>76</sup>

Bishop Plessis of Quebec, who visited New York in 1815 described the cathedral as:

at the farther end of the city towards the country. It has already cost them 90,000 dollars, and nevertheless, it has not yet a steeple, a sacristy, an enclosure nor out-houses. It has not even any plaster outside; the joints are not drawn, although the very common stone of which it is built requires one or the other. In return, the interior is magnificent. Six clustered columns on either side divide the body of the edifice into three naves crowned by Gothic arches, forming a *coup d'oeil* all the more imposing that a painter has figured on the plain wall ending the church behind the altar a continuation of these arches and columns which seem to vanish in the distance and create such an illusion on strangers ignorant of the fact, as to persuade them at first sight that the altar is placed at only half of the length of the church, although it really is at the very end. The wonderful effect produced by this perspective makes this church pass for the finest in the United States. It is likewise remarkable for the large dimensions of its windows, for the elegance of the two rood-lofts, one above the other, with symmetrical flights of stairs leading to the organ above the main entrance. The pews that occupy the nave leave three spacious aisles and are provided with rods and elbow-rests of mahogany.

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This church was consecrated last May by the bishop of Boston under the title of St. Patrick. It is destined to be the bishop's cathedral, although the sanctuary is not disposed in a fitting manner to place him there.<sup>77</sup>

On November 24, 1815 Bishop Connolly arrived in New York to take possession of his Diocese, which embraced not only the whole State of New York but the eastern part of New Jersey as well. The City of New York contained at the time 100,000 inhabitants, of whom about 15,000 were Catholics.<sup>78</sup> These were attended by three Jesuits, Fathers Fenwick, Peter Malou and Maximallian Ranzau, who were later joined by the Dominican, Father Thomas Carby.<sup>79</sup> Besides the two churches in New York City, there was besides only one other, St. Mary's at Albany.

With but four priests for the whole Diocese, until Father Carby arrived, the three Jesuits were in the necessity of binating the Mass in turn, since a high and a low Mass were said in each church. Neither Father Malou nor Ranzau felt sufficiently confident to preach in English. This predicament placed the whole weight of preaching upon Father Fenwick. Not only did Bishop Plessis comment upon this burden<sup>80</sup> but the venerable Bishop Cheverus of Boston wrote to Carroll: "I hope the Bishop of New York will arrive soon. If he does not and some priest able to preach is not sent to the relief of the excellent F. Fenwick, he will certainly sink under a burden heavy enough for two or three pairs of strong shoulders."<sup>81</sup>

With the pastorate of Father Fenwick is linked one of the most remarkable stories of conversions in the history of the American Church. Early in 1816, a young Episcopal minister visited the rectory at No. 15 Jay Street and introduced himself as the Reverend Virgil Horace Barber, President of an academy at Fairfield, New York. He was seeking information concerning the doctrines of the Catholic Church and the solution of certain religious doubts which had troubled his mind.

Virgil Barber was the son of the Reverend Daniel Barber, likewise an Episcopal clergyman. The father had been a soldier of the Revolution and in early life a Congregationalist. In 1787



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he was ordained an Episcopal minister at Schenectady, New York by Bishop Provost. He was then assigned to a charge at Claremont, New Hampshire, where he remained for twenty-four years. At Claremont, in 1807, he baptized Fanny Allen, daughter of General Ethan Allen. She shortly after became a Catholic and in 1808 joined the Community of the convent of the Hôtel Dieu, Montreal. Daniel Barber visited Fanny Allen during her stay there and was present at her profession in 1810. Impressed by his experience, he began to read controversial works. Becoming doubtful of the validity of his Anglican ordination, he visited Father Cheverus of Boston, who answered his questions and supplied him with several books to read.

At this time, his son Virgil was head of the Episcopal Academy at Fairfield, where he lived with his wife and children. The first step towards his conversion was the reading of a *Novena to St. Francis Xavier*, which through curiosity he borrowed from an Irish servant in his household. On a visit to his father in New Hampshire, he found the books which Father Cheverus had supplied, and among those which he took back to New York was Milner's *End of Controversy*. These were read attentively by both Virgil and his wife; so much so that they decided to go to New York to seek information in the libraries of Trinity and St. Paul's Churches and from the Episcopal Bishop Hobart. He was not satisfied in his quest and called upon Father Fenwick of St. Peter's.<sup>82</sup>

After this discussion with the Jesuit, and supplied with several new books by Father Fenwick, he returned to Fairfield, where he and his wife continued the study of doctrine in a debating circle that gradually included the neighboring ministers and his associates at Fairfield. Several months later, he returned to New York, where Father Fenwick advised him to resign the ministry, quit Fairfield and come to the city where a school would be secured for him.<sup>83</sup>

Barber adopted this plan, and when he returned to New York with his family, Father Fenwick secured a home at 24 Vesey Street, adjoining that of Bishop Hobart. There a school was opened which for its short duration was a success. Mrs. Barber



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and the children were baptized Catholics, and she and her husband received their First Communion in St. Peter's on February 9, 1817.

The school lasted for less than half a year when Mr. and Mrs. Barber communicated to Father Fenwick their desire to separate and join a Religious Community, if this could be done with justice to the children.<sup>84</sup> This took Father Fenwick by surprise and he urged them to give up the idea. His time at St. Peter's had now drawn to a close and before he left he commended them to the attention of Bishop Connolly.

Fenwick was not long at Georgetown when he received a letter from the Barbers reiterating their desire to enter the Religious life and asking if an opportunity existed at Georgetown. Father Grassi was then the Jesuit Superior. Archbishop Neale of Baltimore was residing at the Visitation Convent at Georgetown, near which the mother of Father Fenwick lived in order to be near her three Jesuit sons. All three took an interest in helping the Barbers to achieve their desire. Father Grassi accepted Virgil as a Jesuit novice, and his six-year-old son Samuel as a pupil at Georgetown College. Archbishop Neale permitted Mrs. Barber to enter the Visitation Convent as a nun, and her three elder daughters, Mary, Abigail and Susan as pupils in the convent school. Mrs. Fenwick agreed to take Josephine, the youngest child until she was old enough to enter the convent school.

Early in June, the Barbers closed their school in New York and proceeded to Georgetown. There, the formal separation took place on June 21, when Father Grassi invited Mrs. Barber to dine in the community refectory, after which a religious ceremony of separation was conducted by Archbishop Neale. Shortly after this separation, Father Grassi brought Barber with him to Rome<sup>85</sup> where he remained for a year before his return to Georgetown.

On his return, he visited his old home at Claremont, New Hampshire, taking with him Father Charles Ffrench, O.P., then pastor of St. Peter's. They spent a week with Daniel Barber, Father Ffrench preaching and saying Mass—the first to be said in that section. The result was the conversion of Daniel Barber's

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wife; Mrs. Tyler, his sister; her family, including her husband and four sons and four daughters. The latter four became Sisters of Charity and one of the sons, William Tyler, was later the first Catholic Bishop of Hartford, Connecticut. Daniel Barber soon after resigned from the ministry and was converted. After the death of his wife, he spent the last years of his life at the Jesuit houses in Maryland. He died at St. Inigoes in 1834.

Meanwhile, Virgil Barber and his wife met again in the convent chapel on February 2, 1820 to take their vows, he as a Jesuit novice and she as Visitation nun. On this occasion their five children were present. He was ordained priest in 1822 and went back to Claremont, New Hampshire, where he built a small church adjoining his father's house, and opened a school. He returned to Georgetown in 1839 and died there in 1847.

Samuel Barber, his son, was ordained a Jesuit priest and all four of his daughters followed the example of their mother and became nuns, the three oldest Ursulines and the youngest entering the Visitation convent where her mother was.

In the history of the Church all over the world it is not believed that a parallel can be cited for this extraordinary record—a family of seven entering Religious life—the father and son becoming Jesuit priests; the mother and four daughters, Visitation and Ursuline nuns. And it all began at No. 24 Vesey Street, back of Old St. Peter's.<sup>86</sup>

Although St. Peter's has been prominently connected with the career of Mother Seton, whose Cause of beatification has been in progress for some time, there is another candidate for the honors of the altar in Mother Adelaide of St. Teresa O'Sullivan, Prioress of the Carmel at Grajal del Campo in the diocese of Leon, Spain.

Mother Adelaide was born in the parish of St. Peter on October 8, 1817. Her father's family were descendants of the ancient Irish sept of the O'Sullivans of Bantry, County Cork. Her grandfather, Herbert Thomas O'Sullivan, having served as an officer in the British Army, came to New York after the Revolution and settled here with his family. His son John Thomas became American Consul to the Barbary States, and

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while there, met and married an English lady named Mary Rouley, a niece of Lord Chesterfield. She was a non-Catholic and he was sufficiently indifferent to allow her to bring up their six children in the Episcopalian denomination. According to a biographer of Mother Adelaide, "The fourth offspring of the O'Sullivan-Rouleys Adelaide was born on the 8th of October of 1817 in the City of New York, being as the other children of John T. O'Sullivan baptized in the Anglican Church."<sup>87</sup>

He further states:

One day a Bishop, Rt. Rev. Benedict Fenwick, and a friend of Adelaide's father after the dinner to which he had been invited at their home, saw the child who together with her little brothers had reached home from school, looking at him from the door with great admiration. He asked her several questions and was answered so vivaciously, so amiably and in such correct forms that he was completely charmed by the little girl. And right there as if inspired by Heaven he proposed to Mrs. O'Sullivan to allow him to baptize the child in the Catholic Religion, for he felt that she promised to do great deeds which would bring glory to her family. The lady replied that if Adelaide's father had no objections, she would consent to her daughter's entering into the bosom of the Catholic Church. There could not have been proposed anything more agreeable to Mr. O'Sullivan, and more so since the child was to be prepared by Bishop Fenwick and receive holy baptism from his hands. This took place in the year 1821 when Adelaide was only four years old.<sup>88</sup>

A search of the *Baptismal Register* of St. Peter's Church reveals that Mother Adelaide was baptized not in an Episcopal Church but in St. Peter's and not in 1821 when she was four years old but shortly after her birth in 1817. The record follows:

31 xbris 1817.

Adelaidam Franciscam natam 8 8bris feliam joannis O'Sullivan & Maria roulay Matrina adelaida lee.<sup>89</sup>

This record appears in the handwriting of Father Malou who affixed his signature to the bottom of the page. Father Fenwick, unless he came back to New York on a visit, was no longer connected with St. Peter's, having left there in April 1817.<sup>90</sup>

The father, who, by the event, seemed to have recalled some



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of his interest in the Church, died during a storm on the Atlantic. Adelaide, who was then seven years of age encountered some opposition on the part of the family to a continuance of her Catholic practices. She, however, was aided by a pious Catholic seamstress employed in the household, who taught her how to pray and urged her to make her first Confession and Communion which she accomplished at the age of thirteen. In 1835 the family moved to Washington, D. C., where Adelaide, at the age of eighteen, went as a music pupil to the Visitation Convent at Georgetown. There she came under the influence of the famous Sister Stanislaus Jones, and shortly thereafter expressed a desire to enter the Order. In spite of the strong opposition of her brother John, she did so in 1837.

Progressing in spiritual virtue, she expressed a desire to embrace a stricter contemplative life according to the Rule of St. Teresa, and with the advice of Father Felix Varela of New York, she withdrew from the Visitation Convent and went to Cuba where she was received into the Convent of the Discalced Carmelites at Havana on October 15, 1840. Owing to political trouble in Cuba, she could not take her final vows in the Carmelite Order and left Havana for the Carmel at Guatemala, Central America, where the Rule was observed with rigorous fervor. Appreciating her spiritual perfection, the Community elected her Mistress of Novices in 1858 and she made such a success of this office that in 1868 she was unanimously chosen Prioress.

Again, political troubles interfered and in 1873 when a revolution broke out which put anti-clericals in control of the government, the Community was expelled from Guatemala and Mother Adelaide took refuge with her Sisters in Havana, where they arrived in 1875. From here, they went, upon the invitation of Bishop Gross of Savannah in 1877, to Georgia. The plan to found a convent, however, was not practical and in 1879 the Sisters secured a house at Yonkers, New York with the idea of establishing themselves permanently there. They stayed for a year and then accepted the invitation of Sister Irene of the Sisters of Charity to live at the Foundling Asylum in New York.

Finally, upon the advice of the Jesuit Father Salerius, they



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went to Spain. Her brother John and a Spanish gentleman, Gabino Gutierrez, accompanied the party of seven Sisters and four novices to the Diocese of Leon where the Bishop welcomed them and an old Franciscan monastery at Grajal del Campo was secured for them. Here she completed a convent, the plan of which she personally directed to suit the needs of the Carmelite Order and governed her Community with great success.

An ardent follower of St. Teresa of Avila, Mother Adelaide resembled her model in the austere practices of the Carmelite Rule and her accomplishments gave her a fame throughout the whole of Spain. Her death in the odor of sanctity occurred on April 15, 1893. The diocesan Process for her beatification was begun, the formal details have been carried out and the results are now pending in Rome. A magazine published by the Carmelite Fathers of Alba de Tormes, Spain, is especially devoted to her Cause and each issue devotes a special section to favors granted through her intercession.<sup>91</sup>

Her brother, John L. O'Sullivan, was one of the most distinguished and locally prominent New Yorkers of his day. He served in the State legislature in the early 'forties and was the editor of the *Democratic Review*, a quarterly that was the national organ of that political party. In this connection he brought Orestes A. Brownson to New York which was followed by the establishment of the historic *Brownson's Review*. Nathaniel Hawthorne was his most intimate friend. He was Minister to Portugal 1854-1860. He died in his eighty-third year, and before the end, he, and his sister Mary, returned to the Faith of their forefathers. A daughter of the latter became a Religious of the Sacred Heart.<sup>92</sup>

The eve of Bishop Connolly's administration witnessed the withdrawal of the Community of Ursuline nuns, who, seeing little prospect of development here, left for Ireland in 1816. Likewise, the Trappists monks and a Community of Trappist nuns, under the leadership of Dom Augustine, embarked for Havre in October 1814 to reestablish a house of their Order in France, after the fall of Napoleon.

Further, the year 1817 marks the drawing to a close of the

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period of Jesuit residence in New York. Except for Father Malou, all the members of the Order had left the city. Father Fenwick was withdrawn in April, 1817 to become the President of Georgetown College.<sup>93</sup> For eight years the Jesuits had administered the parish and diocese. Under Fathers Kohlmann and Fenwick, the spiritual life of the parish had been revived; converts had been secured; a cathedral had been built; and a college had been established, although not a permanent one. The Jesuit Fathers, in leaving New York, did not return to the city again until invited in 1845 to assume charge of St. John's College, Fordham.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Carroll to Cardinal di Pietro, June 17, 1807. Guilday, *op. cit.*, 630.

<sup>2</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 630. Doctor Guilday considers the action of Bishop Carroll in not recommending either of the O'Briens to the See of New York as strange. He says: (631-2) "And it is difficult to understand just what prompted Carroll to allow the see to remain vacant. The most careful search among his correspondence in the Baltimore Cathedral Archives has failed to reveal his secret motive for this strange omission. . . ."

"In any account of John Carroll's life and character, this action—so singular at the time and as far as the early history of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States is concerned, so filled with danger to the independence of the American Church—ought to be more thoroughly understood. To most historians of the Diocese of New York and of the American Church in general, Carroll's abstention from nominating either of the O'Briens, is viewed as having proved fatal to the peace of the Church in this country, since it seemingly threw open the door to intriguers and to foreign ecclesiastical politicians. Father William O'Brien, the elder of the two brothers, had come to America in 1787, well recommended by Archbishop Troy of Dublin, who, at that time and till long afterwards was friendly to Carroll and to the American Church; and in Carroll's correspondence with the Metropolitan of Dublin there is occasionally a flattering reference to 'my very good friend, Mr. O'Brien of New York.' But until further documentary evidence is brought to light, the problem must remain unsolved."

The answer to the problem raised by Doctor Guilday may be explained as follows: Matthew O'Brien was not at St. Peter's at the time Carroll sent his recommendations to the Propaganda. Carroll wrote to Propaganda on June 17, 1807. Matthew O'Brien's last entry in the Baptismal Records of St. Peter's Church is for a baptism on January 13, 1807, inserted after April 30, 1807. He later served at Philadelphia and died at Baltimore in 1816. On April 7, 1806 Father William O'Brien wrote Carroll that Reverend Mr. Byrne was his assistant, and alluded to trouble with Reverend Matthew O'Brien (from Bayley Mss. cited in McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 63). Father William O'Brien's last entry in the Baptismal Register is August 17, 1807, when he was succeeded as rector by his assistant, Father Sibourd. He was physically—not mentally—in poor health at the time. In May 1807, Father Matthias Kelly was in New York but he quarrelled with the Trustees and went back to Ireland. (Bayley on authority of William Hart, sexton of old St. Patrick's, who arrived in this country about 1806, cited in McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 65). The name of the Reverend John Byrne appears first in the Baptismal Register on June 7, 1807, and he remained at St. Peter's until November 1808 (last entry, November 6). He left then to go to Georgetown but temporarily filled in at St. Mary's, Philadelphia at the solicitation of Bishop Egan.

It seems, therefore, that Bishop Carroll, really had no outstanding candidate in New York for designation to the new See.

<sup>3</sup>Victor F. O'Daniel, "Concanen's Election to the See of New York", *Catholic Historical Review*, II, 22 f.

<sup>4</sup>Letter to Father William O'Brien, Guilday, *op. cit.*, 633.

<sup>5</sup>The work of Father O'Daniel has definitely set aside the view of Shea, Smith, and O'Gorman that Concanen's election was owing to Irish Episcopal interference in the affairs of the American Church. See O'Daniel article, *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 587.

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<sup>7</sup>O'Daniel, *loc. cit.*, 32; Guilday, *op. cit.*, 635; Patrick Cardinal Moran, *Spicilegium Ossoriense*, Dublin, 1874-84, III, 541.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas F. Meehan, "Anthony Kohlmann," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, VIII, 686 f.

<sup>9</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 42 f.

<sup>10</sup>He recorded his first baptism on November 5, and Father Fenwick, November 7; Father Sibourd's last was November 1. Father John Byrne's, November 6.

<sup>11</sup>Kohlmann to Strickland, November 7, 1808, Georgetown Archives, 31.3.

<sup>12</sup>March 21, 1809. Georgetown Archives, 31.3; DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 358.

<sup>13</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas A. Janvier, *In Old New York*, New York, Harper, [c. 1894].

<sup>15</sup>From 1796 until 1801 Catholics were buried in what remained of the plot of St. Peter's, after the church had been built. Prior to this, Catholics were buried in any of the non-Catholic cemeteries, especially Trinity and St. Paul's. Cf., Bennett, *op. cit.*, 433; O'Brien, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 68.

<sup>17</sup>*Minutes and Resolves of the Trustees of St. Peter's Church Respecting the Building of St. Patrick's Church in the City of New York, May 24, 1809-January 4, 1811.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Cheatam's *Republican Watch Tower*, June 20, 1808; cited by Bayley, *op. cit.*, 73 f.

<sup>20</sup>Kohlmann to Grassi, July 25, 1809, Georgetown Archives, 31.3.

<sup>21</sup>Janvier, *op. cit.*, 63 f.

<sup>22</sup>*Minutes and Resolves of the Trustees of St. Peter's Church.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Researches*, XXVIII, 223 f.

<sup>25</sup>Dix, *op. cit.*, II, 195.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 40.

<sup>27</sup>*Records*, XX, 282 f.; *Baltimore Cathedral Archives*, Case 4M5 cited by Guilday, *op. cit.*, 638; cf. *The Spectator*, October 6, 1810, reprinted in *Researches*, XVII, 57. The *Records* give October 12, Guilday October 29 as the date of this letter.

<sup>28</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 61.

<sup>29</sup>Kohlmann to Strickland, April 14, 1809, Georgetown Archives, 31.3.

<sup>30</sup>Concanen to Troy, January 3, 1810, Moran, *op. cit.*, 546.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*; cf. O'Daniel, *loc. cit.*, 38.

<sup>32</sup>Concanen to Maréchal, February 10, 1810; O'Daniel, *loc. cit.*, 38. O'Daniel indicates that this clearly refutes the charge of Shea (II, 628, III 162) that Concanen took umbrage at the appointment and presence of the Jesuits in New York; cf. Guilday, *op. cit.*, 638.

<sup>33</sup>Letter of Kohlmann, January 14, 1810, Georgetown Archives, 65.

<sup>34</sup>Thomas Hughes, S.J., *History of the Society of Jesus in North America*, New York, 1910, I, Part 1, 357.

<sup>35</sup>Edward J. McGuire, "The Elgin Botanic Garden and the New York Literary Institution," *Records and Studies*, IV, 334.

<sup>36</sup>Kohlmann to Strickland, September 14, 1810. Georgetown Archives, 31.3; also *Records and Studies*, I, 72 ff.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>Kohlmann to Strickland, November 28, 1810, *Records and Studies*, I, 75.

<sup>39</sup>Letter of August 18, 1808, Georgetown Archives, 65.

<sup>40</sup>McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 1813.

<sup>41</sup>DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 361.



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<sup>41</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 45.

<sup>42</sup>DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 369.

<sup>43</sup>Kohlmann to Carroll, April, 1812; Bayley Mss, cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 75.

<sup>44</sup>Morris, *op. cit.*, 125 f.

<sup>45</sup>Cited in *Manual of the Corporation of the City of New York, 1864*, 842.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup>"Death-Bed of Tom Paine, 1809. Extract from a letter of Bishop Fenwick to His Brother at Georgetown College." *The United States Catholic Magazine*, V, 558.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, 560.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Mary Agnes Best, *Thomas Paine, Prophet and Martyr of Democracy*, New York, Harcourt, 1927, 397.

<sup>57</sup>John Grassi, S.J., "The Catholic Religion in the United States in 1818." Translated from the Italian and printed in *Researches*, VIII, 98. Cf. also the letter of Father Kohlmann to Mother Seton in which allusion to the interview is made. Bayley, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>59</sup>William Sampson, *The Catholic Question in America*, New York, Gillespie, 1813, 53 f.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 8 ff.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 44, 51.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 102 f.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 114.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, i-cxx.

<sup>66</sup>Shea, III, 167.

<sup>67</sup>*A Brief Reply to a Short Answer to a True Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church Touching the Sacrament of Penance*, New York, 1815.

<sup>68</sup>Revised Statutes, 1829 Part 3, Chapter 7, Section 72; cf. Revised Statutes, 1901, I, 1265.

<sup>69</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 560

<sup>70</sup>Georgetown Archives, 31.5.

<sup>71</sup>Convent Book of St. Clement, Rome; Mss. of Archbishop Corrigan cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 80.

<sup>72</sup>Guilday, *op. cit.*, 641.

<sup>73</sup>Hughes, *op. cit.* (Documents), I, Part 2, 865.

<sup>74</sup>*Mid-America*, Illinois Catholic Historical Society, XV, No. 4, 253-4. In 1817 Father Kohlmann became Superior at Georgetown. Then in 1824 Leo XII appointed him to the chair of theology at the Gregorian University in Rome of the College of Cardinals. Among his theological students who later became famous were Pope Leo XIII, and Archbishop John MacHale of Tuam, Ireland, and it is claimed that Father Kohlmann's teaching greatly influenced their subsequent notable careers. He subsequently was attached as consultor to several important Congregations. He was responsible for the conversion of Augustin Theiner, the historian. The last part of his life was spent as a confessor in the church of the Gesù, where in the Lenten

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season of 1836 he overburdened himself hearing confessions, and succumbed to pneumonia. Among his best writings were thirteen pamphlets on Unitarianism, which Doctor Brownson thought the best that had ever been written on the subject.

<sup>76</sup>Minutes of the Common Council, May 1, 1815. VIII, 195.

<sup>77</sup>*The New York Gazette*, May 5, 1815; cited by Farley, *op. cit.*, 63.

<sup>78</sup>"Extract of Pastoral Visitation of Bishop Plessis," *Records*, XV, 397. A Shea Transcript of the original (in Archives de l'Archevêche de Quebec) is in Georgetown Archives, 31.5.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, 395.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, Bayley, *op. cit.*, 91. Father Carbry first signed the Baptismal Register on December 13, 1815.

<sup>81</sup>*Records*, XV, 397.

<sup>82</sup>May 22, 1815, *Records*, XXII, 149.

<sup>83</sup>Thomas F. Meehan, "Tales of Old New York," *Records and Studies*, XVIII, 165.

<sup>84</sup>*Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>85</sup>Barber was then 34 years old; his wife 28; and the five children, 8, 7, 5, and 3 years and the youngest, 8 months old respectively. *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>86</sup>Before he left he wrote a letter to the Episcopalian Bishop, which Dix, the historian of Trinity Church (*op. cit.*, II, 154), published in his work with the following comment: "He (Barber) was carefully educated, and esteemed highly by friends and parishioners. He held several positions of some importance, among them the principalship of Fairfield Academy. He is said to have been a very strict disciplinarian. When Rector of St. John's Church Waterbury, Connecticut, it is told he kept his family in the strictest submission, allowing its members to speak only in Latin, and even then but seldom. Their diet was meagre and simple.

"As the following letter intimates, on becoming a Roman Catholic he deserted his family entirely.

Georgetown College,  
District of Columbia,  
June 10, 1817

"Right Rev. Sir,

"Being about to embark for Europe, I cannot leave the country without declaring to you and thereby to my late brethren of the Episcopal clergy, my change of religious sentiments, and the causes that contributed to produce it.

"Sometime in the beginning of the year 1816, a casual perusal of St. Cyprian's Epistle to Pope Cornelius, strongly induced me to suspect the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Episcopal Church. Considering it a duty of the first magnitude to obtain satisfaction on so important a point, I instantly went into an investigation of it, with such help as my situation afforded. The authors I consulted were such as Mosheim, Potter, Barrow, Chillingworth and others of the same class. These tended more and more to confirm my suspicions. As a final resort the holy fathers of the first century were taken up. Their testimony was to my apprehension so clearly against the Episcopal system, that I could not at first be persuaded their most obvious sense would be the real sentiment of the authors. This difficulty obviated, it was at once apparent to my mind that the supreme ecclesiastical jurisdiction was given to St. Peter and his successors in the see of Rome from whence it was delegated in various subordinate degrees over the whole Christian world.

"The second point of magnitude, and which seemed to me to embrace every thing of importance that remained, was that of doctrines.

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"And here the same course was pursued, in order to obtain satisfaction, and precisely the same result followed prejudicial to the pretensions of the Episcopalians and decidedly in favor of the claims of the Catholic Church. In this state of things, as I valued the love of God and deprecated his wrath, there was in my estimation no alternative. And though on the one hand the world pointed to a comfortable living that must be abandoned, friends that must be alienated and a family which I loved, which must be set afloat on the tide of uncertainty, still on the other eternal truth and love opened to me the promises of the Gospel.

"My resolution was accordingly taken.

"In discharging the painful duty of taking a last farewell of a Bishop and clergy who have ever possessed a share in the affections of my heart, I beg both your Reverence and them to be assured that my respect and esteem have been augmented rather than suffered any diminution by this change of my sentiments on the subject of religion. I subscribe myself your friend, and,

Very humble servant,

VIRGIL H. BARBER."

<sup>86</sup>Meehan, *loc. cit.*, 169.

<sup>87</sup>A. F. Valerson, O.C.D., *Mother Adelaide of St. Theresa*, Oklahoma City, Prompt Publishing Co., 1928, 12.

<sup>88</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>89</sup>*Baptismal Register*, II, 421.

<sup>90</sup>Father Valerson has written a very interesting account of her life but owing, perhaps, to the Spanish sources of information used by him there are several historical and chronological errors in regard to New York.

<sup>91</sup>Thomas F. Meehan, "Carmelite Saint from New York Born in St. Peter's Parish," the *Catholic News*, September 29, 1928.

<sup>92</sup>*Records and Studies*, XIX, 126.

<sup>93</sup>He held this position twice and was later named Bishop of Boston, and consecrated, November 1, 1825.

## CHAPTER VII

### TRUSTEESISM AT ST. PETER'S

#### THE PASTORATE OF FATHER CHARLES D. FFRENCH, O.P., (1818-1822)

The loss of the services of Father Fenwick by his withdrawal to Georgetown seriously handicapped Bishop Connolly in the administration of his Diocese, in which there were too few priests to serve the needs of Catholics scattered throughout such an extensive area. With a population of 20,000 Catholics in New York City alone, Bishop Connolly had at this time only two missionaries, both men well advanced in years, to help him. Father Carbry, O.P., was then living with the Bishop and assisting at the cathedral while Father Malou was assistant at St. Peter's. The Reverend Michael O'Gorman was pastor at St. Mary's in Albany and he visited all the Northern and Western parts of the State. Bishop Connolly himself was forced to perform parish duties both day and night until early in 1818 he secured the services of "three good priests from Ireland," Fathers Arthur Langdill, Charles D. Ffrench, O.P., and William Taylor.<sup>1</sup> Father Ffrench arrived in January 1818 and was granted faculties to administer the Sacraments and perform all other priestly duties in the Diocese. He was preceeded here by Father Langdill, who in October 1817 was given faculties to minister throughout the Diocese except in the districts of New York City and Albany, unless by consent of the resident clergy in these places.<sup>2</sup> He served in 1818 and 1819 in Newburgh, Goshen, Staten Island and the Jersey missions. Father Taylor arrived in June 1818 from Ireland and was assigned to service at the cathedral, from which Father Carbry in April, 1819 withdrew to go to Charleston, South Carolina. Whatever may be said of the latter's subsequent career in Charleston, during the course of the trustee troubles there, it should be noted that both in Europe and New York he was noted as an ecclesiastic of the utmost integrity and zeal; a scholar and a preacher of remarkable ability. In the same year, the Reverend John Power



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came to America and was assigned as an assistant at St. Peter's.

Since the history of trusteeism in New York during this period centers around both cleric and lay personalities connected with either St. Peter's or St. Patrick's it would be well to call attention to the more important ones.

Ever since the building of St. Peter's Church, the Board of Trustees had more or less perpetuated itself, even though annual elections by the congregation were necessary under the Act of Incorporation for the church. This single Board of Trustees, under whose direction the cathedral was constructed, managed the affairs of both churches. Among those trustees who had been identified with the church from its inception and who now played a prominent part in the trustee fight were Thomas Stoughton and Andrew Morris. The latter was a wealthy soap maker of New York, who served in the Assembly in 1816. It was at his country house, situated on the Bowery, three miles out of the city, that Bishop Plessis found hospitality during his visit in New York in 1815. Other trustees actively engaged in the controversy were James Stoughton, a lawyer, son of the Spanish consul; Lewis Willcocks, clerk of the board, who was a son-in-law of Morris; Count de Spainville, French consul in New York; Dennis McCarthy; Matthew Carroll; Charles Del Vecchio; Thomas Glover; Cornelius Heeney, who was a partner for some years of John Jacob Astor. He was most generous in his gifts to St. Peter's and was responsible for persuading the Sisters of Charity to come to New York in 1817 to assume charge of the orphan asylum. For his innumerable charities the Catholics of New York owe him a debt of gratitude.

A central figure in the stormy trouble was the Belgian Jesuit, Peter Anthony Malou, whose life story really verges on the romantic. Wealthy merchant, father of a family, revolutionary general, Jesuit lay Brother and missionary priest are the successive stages of the varied career of Malou. Born in Ypres, October 9, 1753, the son of a prosperous merchant, his family wealth was augmented by his marriage to Marie-Louise Riga, daughter of a Brussels banker (1777). Two sons were born of this union, the elder of which, John Baptist Malou, was a Senator of Belgium

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and his son, of the same name, subsequently became Bishop of Bruges. As a Belgian patriot and citizen of West Flanders Peter Malou addressed a petition to the Austrian Emperor Joseph II in behalf of the guilds of Ypres whose privileges were threatened. This, together with the prestige of his family, endeared him to the people of his native city, who were exasperated at Austrian tyranny. After the victory of Tournhout, Malou actively entered the rebellion, rising to the position of general in command of the volunteers of West Flanders. In 1790 delegates from the provincial states met at Brussels and declared their independence of Austria. The insurrection, however, was short lived and Malou took refuge in the city of Lille. After a general amnesty was proclaimed by the Emperor, he returned to Ypres.

Then the revolution broke out anew with the declaration of war by France against Austria in 1792. French armies invaded Belgium under the pretext of granting the Belgians liberty; but soon the French wished to unite into one political body the Netherlands and the country of Liege. Malou, at first enthusiastic for French help, opposed the unification movement and since armed opposition was impossible, he headed a delegation from West Flanders to appear before the National Convention at Paris. There he vigorously presented the claims of his people to independence, for which he incurred the opposition of the Convention and so became an exile.

Leaving his wife and children in Hamburg, he came to the United States in 1795, intending to prepare the way for the emigration of his family. He remained for some time at Philadelphia, engaged in the banking business and bought a large tract of land at Cherry Valley, three miles from Princeton, New Jersey, where he intended to establish his home. He was stunned, however, by the news of the death of his wife in 1797. Returning to Hamburg, he found his children already taken care of by a relative, Canon Riga, who brought them back to West Flanders. The exiled Malou could not enter Flanders. Furthermore, revolutionary France considered all Belgian priests as enemies of the State and condemned over seven thousand to deportation. Although less than five hundred were captured, the rest were proscribed or in

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hiding. This prevented Malou from seeking to find his children.

His happiness destroyed, he sought solace in the Religious life. At first he considered entrance into a Trappist monastery, but his poor health precluded that step. In 1801, he entered the Sulpician Seminary of Wolsaw, in Franconia, where he received Minor Orders. After four years he quit the seminary, for unknown reasons, and sought under an assumed name admission to the Society of Jesus as a lay Brother. Admitted to the Jesuit novitiate at Dunébourg, White Russia, in the year that Father Kohlmann was sent to America, he was employed as a gardner, until one day, as the rector was escorting a Belgian officer through the garden, the latter suddenly stopped and saluted his former general. The rector, in amazement at the disclosure, encouraged Malou to renew his study for the priesthood and in 1811 he joined the American band of missionaries. At that time he was fifty-eight years of age and was not in good health.

After his arrival in New York, he was assigned to the prefectship of the Literary Institution. He was not there long when on November 20, 1811, he wrote a long and very candid account of his impressions of the state of affairs to the General in Russia, touching at length on the current controversy between the Jesuit Superior, Father Charles Neale, and the American Bishops as to the former's right to remove members of the Society independently of the will of the Bishops. He, who was to be the storm center of the trustee trouble to come, received a mild rebuke from the General who replied:

that concerning projects and affairs, the care of writing about them to the Father General, should be left to the Superior and his consultors; otherwise it would cause too great confusion in the mind of the Father General, if he had to enter into the view of individuals. I remark further, that it is essential that you avoid in your letters certain expressions, as that of intrigues; if the letter were intercepted, it would cause your simplicity to be abused, and too evil an opinion of you and of the group to be entertained.<sup>3</sup>

After two years of teaching at the Literary Institution, and discontented with the progress of the college, Father Malou asked for and secured his transfer from New York. In May 1813, he



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was admitted to the Select Body of the Clergy, a Maryland corporation formed in 1784 whose members were mostly Jesuits, and whose purpose was to secure the maintenance of ecclesiastical life and discipline, and the preservation of ecclesiastical property. After he left New York, the Superior intended to send him to Newtown, Maryland, but because of the poor condition of his health, which suffered from a rheumatic complaint, the Superior kept Malou at Georgetown.

About this time an unfortunate misunderstanding arose between Archbishop Carroll, himself a former Jesuit, and the Society as to the corporate right of the latter at that time to hold ecclesiastical property. Malou was reported to the Archbishop as having expressed himself rather strongly in opposition to him.<sup>4</sup> This incurred the displeasure of the Archbishop to such an extent that he wrote Father Grassi on October 16, 1813:

I see, methinks, a cloud gathering and raised up by some anti-Jesuitical clergymen of different nations amongst us, which threatens much trouble if they can raise it; but this enmity would give me little alarm, if it were not imitated more and more by the presumptuous language and premature pretensions of some of your subjects. Mr. Malou, as Pasquet relates, was rash enough to say to him, or before him, that all estates, held by the corporation, belong now to the Society, and ought to be under the control of the General.<sup>5</sup>

At Georgetown, an unpleasant difference of opinion developed between Father Grassi, the Superior, and Malou who wrote to the General in Russia requesting to be allowed to return to Europe. The reply was delayed because of the conditions of the time in Russia and meanwhile, Malou came to New York to join Fathers Kohlmann and Fenwick. Father Kohlmann assigned him to the mission at Newburgh where he labored for four or five months. Upon Kohlmann's recall from New York in 1815, Malou became assistant to Father Fenwick. It was here that on June 26, 1817 he wrote a letter to Archbishop Maréchal, addressing it to "*Monseigneur*."<sup>6</sup> In this letter, he gave a picture of his life in New York before and after the arrival of Bishop Connolly. He spoke of his ill health as continuing to cause him trouble. He condemned Father Kohlmann in his management of the



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Literary Institution and by innuendo and vague hints he insinuated charges against Father Fenwick that were unworthy of a fellow Jesuit to report to one who was not of the Order.<sup>7</sup> Further, in a memorial which he sent to Rome in May 1819, against Bishop Connolly he reiterated the ugly charge (which was untrue) against the zealous Father Fenwick which may have caused his removal from New York. At least Malou wrote that in consequence: "he [Fenwick] was retired from the mission, as he should have been."<sup>8</sup> Although these facts may seem a pre-judgment of Malou in the trustee trouble, nevertheless they are essential to an understanding of his part in the business, for if he would condescend to criticise the worthy Father Kohlmann and the future Bishop of Boston he probably would not hesitate to do what he did in the story that is to follow.

Allied with Father Malou and the trustees in opposition to Bishop Connolly was the Reverend William Taylor, a native of Ireland, who arrived here on invitation of the Board of Trustees and the Bishop in 1818. A Presbyterian and a student of Trinity College, Dublin, he became a Catholic and was admitted to the seminary at Maynooth. His course, however, was temporarily cut short owing to his tendency to liberalism.<sup>9</sup> Endowed with great power of intellect and a personality extremely affable and winning in manner, he became popular in New York during his assignment to the Cathedral, where he soon acquired a reputation as a pulpit orator.<sup>10</sup> Regarding Bishop Connolly as a good but incapable man, there is no doubt that he aspired to the honor himself and actually made a trip to Rome, it has been said, to effect that promotion.

Father Charles D. Ffrench, who espoused the cause of the Bishop, was likewise a convert, having been the son of the Protestant bishop of Galway. Together with his brother, who later became a Catholic bishop in Ireland, he was cut off after the death of his father from a share in the paternal estate as a punishment for what was considered his apostacy. They were taken under the care of the Dominican Fathers at the convent in Galway and ordained as members of that Order, Charles a priest in 1799. First exercising the ministry in Ireland, he came to

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America in order to establish a house of his Order at St. John's, New Brunswick, then under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec. It was he whom Virgil Barber, after the latter's conversion in New York, took with him on his return to Claremont, New Hampshire; where Ffrench said Mass for the first time in that section, and conducted a mission, which resulted in the conversion of seven of Virgil's relatives. Father Ffrench was at that time assigned to St. Peter's Church, where he became embroiled in the bitter trustee struggle.

Since the most incredulous charges were made against Father Ffrench who loyally defended the Bishop in the heat of the trustee wrangle, it would be well to refer now to the testimony of Bishop Fenwick who began in 1825 a *Memoranda of the Diocese of Boston*, and which was completed by Bishop Fitzpatrick from 1846 to 1861. In estimating the value of their testimony it should be said that neither ever hesitated to pass censure on their clergymen when it was deserved. Throughout the whole of Bishop Fenwick's diary, Father Ffrench is spoken of as a very fine singer and preacher. It is also noteworthy that nearly every time that he appeared in Boston, the Bishop had him sing high Mass and preach at the cathedral. On the death of Father Ffrench Bishop Fitzpatrick, who visited Lawrence for the occasion, made the following entry in his diary:

He [Ffrench] erected several churches during his time. In this diocess the Churches of Portland, Eastport, Dover and the first small church in Lawrence was built by him. He was a man of great bodily beauty and magnificent personal appearance tall and although weighing 350 pounds not disproportioned in any way nor unwieldy. In the ministry he was remarkable for his zeal energy and enterprise and the piety of his conduct and regularity of life. His manners were most aimiable and winning, his temper even and placid, his spirits buoyant and sprightly though seasoned with becoming gravity. Perhaps the most remarkable of his virtues was the charity which regulated at all times his conversation. He was never heard to speak ill of any person and the ingenuity with which he would endeavour to present in some favorable light the faults ever of his own enemies was at times as amusing as it was edifying. During the last two years of his life he was

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disabled by a dropsical effection seated principally in the legs from the discharges of the active duties of the ministry. He had not been able to say Mass for several months previous to his death.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, when Father Ffrench applied for employment in the Boston Diocese (1826), he brought with him a very strong recommendation from the Reverend Mr. McMahon, Pastor at St. John's, whither he went after leaving New York, although he was not engaged in the ministry there. Bishop Fenwick made the following comment at the time in his *Memoranda*:

The testimony of . . . [Father McMahon] . . . in regard to the character of the Revd. Mr. Ffrench since his acquaintance with him at St. Johns is highly gratifying. Upon the strength of these papers the Bp. gives him Faculties and stations him at Eastport in Maine recommending to him to build if possible a church there and to attend in a particular manner to the Papamaquoddi Tribe of Indians near that town. The Bp. sees with pleasure the Diocess becoming by degrees better provided.<sup>12</sup>

Since Bishop Fenwick was intimately acquainted with the situation in New York, it may be said that his affection and regard for Ffrench is all the greater tribute to the character of the latter.

The principal clerical characters, then, in the trustee dispute were Fathers Ffrench and Carbry (for the short time the latter was in New York), supporting Bishop Connolly and Fathers Malou and Taylor upholding the trustees.

The trustee system was not in itself opposed to Catholic discipline. To this day, some Catholic congregations of Germany, Italy, and Switzerland elect their pastors and only recently did Rome again approve of this method of pastoral election. The system, therefore, was not necessarily un-Catholic but in the United States it conditioned serious abuses that rent the Church from New York to New Orleans.

Under Roman and Canon Law, the Church was regarded as a moral personality entitled to hold property as such; but in England after the time of Henry VIII, the Protestant Establishment, although acknowledged by public law, was little more than the creature of the State, for English law refuses "to recognize the



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Church as an actual corporation with the power of holding property in her own name; hence the civil power deals only with specific individuals . . . "13 when incorporation is sought.

The American legal theory likewise made this fundamental departure from the conception of "moral personality" known to Roman and Canon law and there can be no corporation which is not the creation of the civil authority.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the early church incorporation laws resulted from the necessity of providing trustees in whom might be vested the title to ecclesiastical property. During the early part of the nineteenth century, the prevailing policy of the States seemed to be based on the idea that the civil power should treat all the religious denominations alike by doing as little as possible for any of them and forcing them all to conform to one procedure.<sup>15</sup>

From the Catholic point of view this was an unhappy arrangement since a Catholic parish derives its rights "not from the lay members who compose it but from the fact that it is an integral part of the Universal Church."<sup>16</sup> "Consequently the real owner of the parish church is the parish itself. . . . Especially must the false notion be eliminated that the parishioners are the owners of the parish church."<sup>17</sup>

We have already seen that New York was the first State of the union to pass (in 1784) an act "to enable all the religious denominations in this state to appoint trustees." It was under this enactment, that "The Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church in the City of New York" incorporated on June 10, 1784. The controversies that subsequently ensued between the lay trustees and Fathers Whelan and Nugent were, though serious in their time, but foreshadowings of a more difficult period to follow.

In 1813, *An Act for the Incorporation of Religious Societies* superseded the Act of 1784 and was radically responsible for the trustee trouble as it affected the Catholic Church in New York down to the time of Archbishop Hughes. The act made separate provision for the Episcopal and Dutch Reformed Churches and provided in all other religious societies for the election of three to nine trustees to manage the temporalities; that these trustees were to be elected by the male persons of full age belonging to



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the church and who were stated worshippers thereof, and who supported it for at least one year preceding the election; and that the salary of the minister was to be decided by a vote of the congregation and ratified by the trustees.<sup>18</sup>

The purpose of the whole act was to place the control of the temporal affairs of these religious societies in the hands of a majority of the corporators, independent of priest or bishop, presbytery, synod or other ecclesiastical authority. The fact that the act seemed to studiously ignore the hierarchial government of the Catholic Church led to a belief at a later time that it was never meant for the Catholic Church.<sup>19</sup>

At the bottom of the internal dissension prevalent in the Church at this time was the American spirit of democracy in the management of Church as well as State. Archbishop Maréchal thus put it in his *Report* to Rome, October 6, 1818:

That the American people clings with the most ardent love to the civil liberty it enjoys. Again it is a primary [*palmare*] principle of civil liberty among them, that absolutely all magistrates, whether high or low, at stated times of the year, should be elected by popular vote. Likewise all sects of Protestants, who constitute the greater part of the people, are ruled by the same principles and accordingly elect or dismiss, at their pleasure, their pastors. Now the Catholics living in their society, are evidently exposed to the danger of admitting the same principles of ecclesiastical rule, and by the artifices of impious priests, who cater to their pride, are easily led to believe that they also have the right to elect and dismiss their pastors as they please.<sup>20</sup>

He further stated that the usual procedure in the building of a church was for the Catholics in any part of his diocese to collect a fund by subscription from Catholics and non-Catholics alike, purchase property and confer title on several of their number who as trustees (and unlike the *Marquilliers*, or trustees of Catholic property in Europe) were the holders and true possessors of all the temporal possessions of the Church and exercising authority over them as over their own lands. Possessed of this authority, they could then raise the standard of rebellion against the Bishop. Maréchal, however, felt that the trustee system could be admitted

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without danger if the elected trustees were, either in the title of possession or by contract, bound to recognize the essentially independent functions of the pastor:

that if he should be guilty or accused of any crime, his cause should be remitted to the bishop, and he should be considered innocent as long as he had not been condemned by him; that they should not by their own private authority eject him from the church, that they should never allow a priest destitute of jurisdiction to celebrate in the church, whose care is committed to them nor detain in it against the will of the bishop, a priest publicly bound by censure, etc.<sup>21</sup>

In the conditions of social and political unrest in the United States consequent upon the Revolution may be sought other roots of the trustee trouble. The country was distrustful of everything European. The French Revolution had brought to America refugee priests possessed of a hatred of republican ideas. The Irish, who comprised the largest number of Catholic immigrants to this country, were inimical to anything English. In a Catholic population that was a conglomeration of divergent viewpoints there was bound to be trouble between clergy and laity. The story of trusteeism in New York, as elsewhere, is essentially a story of national prejudice and bias. French priests as a rule spoke English imperfectly if at all. Since good preaching was an absolutely essential requirement to a minister in those days, the Irish wanted their clergy to possess that quality which was the forte of ministers of other denominations. Furthermore, French domination over the Church in America was hardly not an imaginary phantom<sup>22</sup> when one realizes that besides Plessis of Quebec, who interested himself in the Church of this country, there were Maréchal of Baltimore, Flaget of Bardstown, Cheverus of Boston, Dubourg of Louisiana, and that De Barth was suggested as a candidate for the See of Philadelphia.

The Irish naturally felt that they were not being sufficiently considered in the affairs of the Church. Archbishop Carroll, although of Irish extraction, had no particular predilection for the *homines inferioris notae*<sup>23</sup> who defended Nugent against his authority. Archbishop Maréchal disliked the Irish although he

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alleged reasons other than racial prejudice. In his *Report* of 1818 to Rome he said:

Hiberni qui spiritu Dei aguntur, et moribus vere ecclesiasticis sunt imbuti, religioni feliciter serviunt . . . at vero tot ex Hibernia hic advenerunt sacerdotes, turpi ebrietatis vitio dediti, ut non nisi post maturum examen, curam animarum eis secure committere possums . . . verum mirum est quantam auctoritatem illi ebriosi sacerdotes exercent in infiman suae gentis plebem, cum enim ebrietatem tamquam levem tantum imperfectionem haec habeat, suos perditos pastores strenue defendit, ipsis sociatur, atque una cum ipsis schismatis vexillum erigitur ac tuetur. Illud lamentabile factum probatur evidenter historia omnium dissectionum quibus ab incunabulo exagitata fuit america septantrionalis ecclesia. Non Americani, non Angli, non aliarum Europeanarum gentium advenae, pacem perturbarunt, aut perturbant Carolopoli, Norfolkio, Philadelphia, etc., etc., sed sacerdotes Hiberni intemperantiae aut ambitioni dediti, una cum contribulibus suis, quos innumeris artibus sibi devinciunt. Nuperime variis scriptis suadere conati sunt huic imperitae plebi, episcopos Boston. Bardensis et meipsum secreto intendere gallicanam hierarchiam in hisce provinciis institutere, et Hibernos sacerdotes expellere.<sup>24</sup>

Even among the letters of the French laity attending St. Peter's Church is found this unfortunate distrust of race for race. M. Sorbieu, a former member of St. Peter's parish and in 1820 a resident of Rouen wrote to Pierre Toussaint, of whom we shall hear later, in the following vein:

I see with much uneasiness the pitiable state in which I find the Church of New York and the curates who are these *malheureux sauvages Irlandais* who believing that they are giving a great proof of their Catholicism in giving scandal all the more dangerous in a country where our Religion has so many enemies, they are more to be pitied because they have no idea of all the harm they do, I deplore all the horrors that are being committed in this Church and thank the good God for having withdrawn me from that country in order not to see what is happening now.<sup>25</sup>

Again, in another letter:

I [Sorbieu] attribute the small respect which these *malheureux Irlandais* have for religion to their ignorance, the



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majority of all these intriguers are Catholics in name only and aspire only to the honor of being trustees—that is the end to which they limit the exercise of their religion. . . .<sup>26</sup>

Financial difficulties in the affairs of the two churches, St. Peter's and St. Patrick's, which were both under the temporal management of the one Board of Trustees, were the occasion for the outbreak of the trouble.

Bishop Connolly, who was compelled in his advanced age to act in the capacity of a parish priest, soon had to contend with the opposition of the Board of Trustees, who either refused or was unable to support the two churches. They withheld the salaries of the clergy and at times even threatened to withhold that of the Bishop.<sup>27</sup> As a result, Doctor Connolly on April 14, 1817 brought about the dissolution of the single board of trustees, known as "The Trustees for the Roman Catholic Congregation of St. Peter's Church in the City of New York in America." A division of property was made with the Cathedral congregation and on April 17, 1817, the corporate title of St. Peter's became "The Trustees of St. Peter's Church in the City of New York." The first set of trustees for each of the churches was appointed in the separate acts of incorporation and a majority of these, including Francis Cooper, were the supporters of Bishop Connolly. The charters, however, provided for an annual election of trustees and in March 1818, the Malou group, headed by Thomas Stoughton, won decisively, only thirty-six votes being cast in opposition.

Before this election, Father Malou had a circular letter printed which he distributed to all voters, telling them for whom to vote. Upon the appeal of members of the congregation to the Bishop, he ordered a letter read after the Masses in each church, disclaiming any knowledge or sanction of Malou's action. Father Malou followed this up with a printed broadcast in which he declared that he acted not as a priest but as an American citizen and that if the Bishop had a conscience, he had one too, which he also followed.<sup>28</sup>

Before the elections of the next year took place, both Fathers Ffrench and Carbry, actively engaged in a campaign to reinstate a group of trustees friendly to the Bishop. Since Father Carbry



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left for Charleston, Father Ffrench called meetings at various places for the purpose stated which incurred the opposition of the then existent board.

Meanwhile, rumors were circulated which reflected upon the character of Father Ffrench while he was located in the Diocese of Quebec. The trustees were quick to institute an investigation, but the information not being sufficiently precise, Father Malou, to whom the original rumors had been bruised, sought more definite knowledge from the Bishop of Quebec. The latter replied: "I know what I ought to think of Mr. F; and I will with pleasure let it be known to Monsignor your Bishop what he himself should think of him, when he should like to ask me on this subject."<sup>29</sup> From this not very informative reply, Father Malou assumed the worst and Bishop Connolly was urged at a meeting of the Board of Trustees to make the inquiry of Bishop Plessis and to convey the answer to them. Bishop Connolly frankly refused to comply on the ground that it was none of their affair and that they were not judges in ecclesiastical cases. He informed them that Father Ffrench had come from Canada with a perfectly good and legitimate *exeat*, as was shown in a letter which he possessed, and that upon the strength of this *exeat* and letter he gave him faculties.

The letter showed that Father Ffrench wished to stay in Canada after getting his *exeat* and that during this extra time, when his faculties would normally cease, he had them renewed to extend even to absolution from reserved cases. To Bishop Connolly this was certain evidence that if he were guilty as charged, Bishop Plessis would not have renewed his faculties.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, the time for the election of April 1819 was approaching. A meeting on the first of that month of the electors of both churches was called for the purpose of nominating candidates for the ensuing term. A committee of nominations was about to be named when Father Ffrench made an appearance, whereupon a commotion was occasioned and a vote to adjourn was taken, the outcome of which could not be determined in view of the confusion.

Father Ffrench, it is said, demanded possession of the Chair

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from Thomas Stoughton, president of the meeting, against the protest of the latter. Stoughton refused to yield, and amid an uproar, retired from the meeting hall, Ffrench taking the Chair and continuing the meeting after those in sympathy with Stoughton withdrew.

This affair resulted in a suspension of the salary of Father Ffrench by the Board of Trustees and a demand for his removal from service in either church, since he was considered by them no longer useful in the city.

Bishop Connolly declined to accede to the request declaring that if he thought Father Ffrench's action was self-motivated he would, but that if it preceeded from the desire of members of the congregation he would not.

Father Ffrench continued his campaign against the reelection of these trustees. He issued among others a printed appeal, *To the Members of the Roman Catholic Communion of the City of New York*,<sup>31</sup> in which he accused the Board of Trustees of withholding a financial statement of the condition of the congregation, accused Father Malou with being the source of the charges made against him, and sought to defend himself against them. Regarding the election he asked them:

to fill up the vacancies for trustees with men who have your confidence; men upon whom you can rely, and who never can be duped as other have been, into a policy calculated to banish from you your priests; thus you will defeat their artful system, insure for yourselves you Irish clergy, and restore peace and harmony to a distracted congregation.<sup>32</sup>

In church on Easter Sunday he renewed his appeal for the election of trustees in support of the Bishop and himself with the result that on the following day, when the election took place, his nominees were elected by a majority of eighty votes out of a total vote cast of three hundred—many eligible voters of both congregations not having participated. Thus, the Bishop was reinforced by gaining three trustees for St. Peter's Church, and five for St. Patrick's Cathedral, three of each church going out by law and the seats of two of St. Patrick's having been vacated by death

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and resignation.<sup>33</sup> The inspectors of election, however, declared two of these five ineligible for office.

The Board of Trustees of St. Peter's was still composed of six old trustees who constantly reiterated their demand for an investigation of Father Ffrench. On September 6, they drew up written charges against him. These were of two classes. One contained six specifications of improper conduct in regard to the election, and the second, four specifications of unclerical behavior while in the Diocese of Quebec. They demanded that Bishop Connolly adopt a proper mode of procedure against him. By October 22, they received no satisfaction from the Bishop. He continued the assignment of Father Ffrench at St. Peter's although his salary was paid by the trustees of St. Patrick's. This was not to the liking of the trustees, who wrote Archbishop Maréchal that they hoped it would not become necessary for them to examine critically the extent of their Bishop's authority.<sup>34</sup>

On October 22, 1819, the Board of Trustees decided to appeal to Archbishop Maréchal to interpose his authority, whereupon Bishop Connolly had inserted in the records of the meeting his solemn protest: "against the Archbishop or any other Ecclesiastic's interfering in the concerns of the Catholic Congregation of New York, unless expressly being empowered by the Holy Father the Pope."<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, the trouble in New York began to occupy the attention of neighboring Bishops. As early as April 20, 1818 a twenty-six page document was forwarded to Archbishop Maréchal in vindication of Father Malou.<sup>36</sup> Bishop Cheverus of Boston suggested to the Archbishop (June 25, 1818) that the appointment of an Apostolic Delegate was the only hope for peace. Bishop Plessis of Quebec received many letters from Father Malou which were "filled with bitter diatribe, innuendo, and finally open charges of misconduct against Ffrench, whom he calls 'the sworn enemy of all the French priests, especially bishops and Jesuits.'"<sup>37</sup> Lewis Willcocks, who was of the Malou faction, denounced Father Ffrench in one of the meetings of the Board of Trustees, whereupon Father Ffrench instituted a suit against him for defamation of character. Willcocks responded by compelling Father



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Ffrench to appear in court for satisfaction of an alleged loan of \$100 which had been lent nine months previously.<sup>38</sup> He likewise started for St. John's, New Brunswick, to collect evidence there concerning the actions of Ffrench.

Archbishop Maréchal declined to accept the invitation of the trustees of October 22, 1819 to intervene in the affair, but soon thereafter he received a letter from Cardinal Fontana, dated September 11, 1819, asking for information as to how New York could expeditiously be restored to quiet and discipline. Upon its receipt he wrote to Bishop Connolly his realization that he could do nothing as Archbishop but offered his cheerful cooperation to the end that peace should be restored.<sup>39</sup>

Bishop Connolly replied, reviewing the history of the trouble between the trustees and himself, but felt that the only solution was to await the next election of March 1820, when three new trustees would be voted upon. He continued:

As I hope that these three new trustees will be men of moderation, I flatter myself that our troubles will then finish, in case Father Malou be called away by the Revd. Fr. Kohlmann, who indeed called him away from this diocese last May; but requested at the same time that he would be permitted to stay here until he would be able to travel to Georgetown, as he had broken the cap of his knee some months before. All this was granted to him with the continuation of his pension; yet he continues still here, tho' well able to travel.<sup>40</sup>

He concluded with the thought that any decision given before the next election would not be satisfactory to either of the contending sides.

The trustees feared that the ensuing election would be a victory for Bishop Connolly and Father Ffrench. They then decided to send an envoy to plead their cause in Rome in the person of Father Taylor. He had already been suggested by Malou to Maréchal as a proper subject to be named coadjutor-Bishop of New York.<sup>41</sup>

Taylor assured the Archbishop that he did not go to accuse any man but to "*state facts* and if the administration of a Bishop is, by *implication*, brought into question, I am not responsible, for



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the accuracy of my statement to the Holy See, I pledge my character which is dearer to me than life."<sup>42</sup> Maréchal replied in approval of the project but advised him to inform Bishop Connolly of the whole affair before leaving. He further warned him that his mission was a delicate one, since the Holy See would never "condemn a prelate or priest without dispassionately considering the principles upon which he may found his justification or ground for defence."<sup>43</sup>

This caused Taylor to hesitate for the moment but then he wrote stating that he premised the object of his journey to lay before the Sacred College a statement in Latin of the differences that divided the congregation, that he would not be the bearer of dispatches from any portion of the laity against the Bishop but that the laity had enabled him to meet the expenses consequent upon the voyage, and that he would request the appointment of either Maréchal or Plessis as judge. Taylor left sometime in December and on his way met at Lyons Bishop Plessis who was returning to Quebec. Informing Maréchal of the meeting, he wrote:

From my conversation with the Bishop of Quebec, I could infer that some unprincipled person has industriously misrepresented the state of the Catholic Religion in America and has given an unfavourable description of the French Bishops and Clergy in that Country at the Court of Rome. Cardinal Fontana told the Bishop of Quebec that the people did not like to have French Bishops in that country. I shall, you may depend on it, connect this unblushing calumny with its source and give it a complete refutation before my departure from Rome.<sup>44</sup>

Up to this time, Father Power, who was at St. Peter's did not seem to have become an active participant. On March 2, 1820, a month before the coming election, he preached a sermon on death, and he suggested that the thought of death should regulate the friendships one would wish to form and the animosities one would be inclined to entertain. He then alluded to the report which had gained circulation through the congregation that Taylor "went to Rome to tear the mitre off Doctor Connelly's head or to have himself promoted to the Coadjutorship of this See," and appealed to the charity of the congregation for their silence until Taylor's

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return. Father Power in writing to Archbishop Maréchal that day as to what subsequently happened said :

The moment I left the pulpit, Mr. Ffrench, then the celebrant, addressed the people in a harangue more like the reverie of a madman than an exhortation falling from the lips of a minister of the God of peace. . . . having thus expressed himself and in a fury that would horrify the stoutest heart . . . he ran to the Altar and in all the impetuosity of passion offered up the holy Sacrifice, to the great scandal and horror of the Congregation. Yet, my Lord, I am censured by Doctor Connolly and his party for my exertions in endeavouring to restore peace and harmony and Mr. Ffrench after all the public disedification he has given is lauded by his Bishop who "is indeed surprised that he was so moderate." We are at present dreadfully convulsed. If you could prevail upon yourself to interfere, I am convinced that such interference would have a salutary effect and would confer an everlasting favour on the thinking portion of the congregation.<sup>45</sup>

The election was a victory for the group supporting the Bishop, for

at an election of Trustees held at St. Peter's Church on the 3 day of April 1820 the following persons were elected Trustees by a majority of the Pew Holders and stated Hearers of said Church qualified as voters according to Law, Viz., Darby Noon, Cornelius Heeney, Michael Muldoon, Lawrence Power, James Mathews, Hugh O'Hare, Charles McCarthy, James J. McDonnell, and George Bowen.<sup>45</sup>

Taylor, who by April was in Rome, prepared a paper on the causes of the conflict in New York, and in which, despite his avowal that he had no intention of attacking Bishop Connolly, ascribed as the second cause of the trouble—*ex antistitis mentis et judicii imbecillitate*.<sup>46</sup>

After completing the purpose of his mission he left Rome at the beginning of August 1820, and was urged by the Sacred College to wait in Ireland for the decision of Propaganda. Since no decision was immediately forthcoming, he left Paris, where he was staying in December and arrived in New York, February 1, 1821. Bishop Connolly promptly refused to give him faculties, and Taylor appealed from this decision to Archbishop Maréchal.

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Realizing, however, that his usefulness in New York was over, he applied for placement to the Metropolitan as well as to Bishops Flaget, Plessis and Cheverus, and the last named accepted him for the Diocese of Boston.

Bishop Plessis, who had been asked by Cardinal Fontana to visit New York and report the situation to him, arrived in New York in July 1820 and subsequently recommended the removal of both Ffrench and Malou. He wrote in his Report:

At New York, Monsignor Connolly, a man noted for his knowledge and for the many virtues worthy of the episcopate, after having been for a long time blinded by Father Carbry, is now being led by another Irish Dominican, named Charles Ffrench, employed in the missions of my diocese from 1813 to 1817, when I deprived him of his faculties. . . . The Bishop who had taken him in with good faith and had given him his confidence, continued to show preference for him, in spite of the information which the saner element of his priests offered, and is assured that he has the support of the majority of his people in so doing. But this majority is composed of the Irish rabble (*la canaille irlandaise*) which Father Ffrench knows so well how to arouse and to lead. It is an ignorant and savage lot, always ready to take the part of anyone who flatters it. The respectable Catholics of this city, driven to extremes by so much credulity on the one hand and by so much wickedness on the other, confuse the bishop with his favourite, speak of the bishop with very little respect, and finally separate themselves from him, thus giving scandal to the Protestants.<sup>47</sup>

Archbishop Maréchal was pleased with the view of Plessis regarding the situation and on January 6, 1821, he sent the "sorrowful news" of the nominations to the Sees of Philadelphia, Charleston and Richmond and added:

La lettre que votre bonté pour moi et votre zèle pour la religion vous ont porté à écrire à Rome est arrivée malheureusement trop tard. *Je n'ai que des nouvelles désastreuses à vous donner.* La Propaganda a rejeté les missionnaires éprouvés que moi et mes suffragants lui avaient recommandés. *Elle leur a préféré des prêtres irlandais.* Elle a nommé Dr. Conwell évêque de Philadelphie, Dr. England évêque de Charleston, et enfin Dr. Kelley évêque de Richmond.<sup>48</sup>



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Believing that "whenever one speaks from passion it is easy for one to deceive himself," the Sacred Congregation was meanwhile sifting the many documents on both sides of the case and was judiciously and impartially seeking to judge between the two presentations what were the facts. Among the documents for consideration was a "Petition of the Roman Catholics of the City of New York to the Holy Father." It seems to have been written either by Malou or under his inspiration, and it secured the signatures of 1,000 Catholics out of a population of about 20,000. A great majority of these signers were probably Haitian French. The Petition was signed by Andrew Morris and James Stoughton, in the name of the trustees, who stated at the outset that they did not speak for the greater part of the Catholics of the city but only "the religious and sensible part." It reviewed the increase made in the congregation over a period of thirty years, by conversion and immigration, the growth from the latter source being almost wholly from Ireland, the immigrants being poor and without education.<sup>49</sup> The only charge raised against Bishop Connolly in this Petition, and in fact in any of the documents, was that he, "although a pious prelate" was "weak, who allows himself to be ruled by another. . . ."<sup>50</sup> This document as well as others by Taylor and Malou reiterate the charges against French.

Taylor suggested that an Apostolic Delegate, preferably Cheverus be appointed. Maréchal suggested either Plessis or Cheverus as a Nuncio. Propaganda, however, rejected this proposition, holding that if anyone should be sent he should not be *ex parte*.

Propaganda was surprised that Archbishop Maréchal should favor the trustees in New York, while at the same time he fought those in Charleston:

Hence the Archbishop of Baltimore does himself little justice in taking such a great part in sustaining the trustees against Bishop Connolly although he himself says he knows little about the affair. He should understand that the case in question is just the same as the case in Charleston and he ought to keep quiet about Norfolk and Philadelphia. And has not he himself said that throughout the United States there is the same spirit of opposition to the bishops on the



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part of trustees? How then could the archbishop forget this truth and attribute all the wrong to his confrère Connolly and all the right to the trustees in New York?<sup>51</sup>

At a general session of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda Fide, held July 3, 1821, the suggestions to appoint the Metropolitan, or a Provincial Bishop, or an Apostolic Delegate to conduct an investigation were voted down<sup>52</sup> They did, however, direct that Bishop Connolly be urged to consider proposing the name of a coadjutor to assist him in his work.

Regarding Father Ffrench, the following decision was reached:

Let it be written to the Bishop, that he counsel Father Ffrench, that he should leave his diocese for the sake of peace within three months from the date of the reception of the letter of the Sacred Congregation; and should he not do it, the Bishop should force him under pain of suspension if that can be done without scandal.<sup>53</sup>

Regarding Father Malou, they decreed that the following instruction should be sent Bishop Connolly:

that he order Father Malou in the name of the Sacred Congregation that he should proceed from the Diocese of New York immediately (*quam primum*) under the penalty of privation of all missionary faculties and also suspension *a divinis* if he does not obey the order and that this should be made known to the Father General of the Society of Jesus.<sup>54</sup>

As to Father Taylor, it was considered that the Bishop had already taken sufficient action.

Father Malou did not leave New York and so automatically incurred the suspension decreed by Propaganda. Father Kohlmann, his Superior at Georgetown had written him several times to return to the college. He did not comply and sought the influence of Prince Stohenlohe and Monsignor Morel, Vicar-General of Nantes, under whose direction and protection Father Malou embraced the ecclesiastical state, to win the case over his immediate superior. Father Luigi Fortis, General of the Society, wrote to the Cardinal Prefect on July 9, 1821 that "Malou must obey the repeated requests of his immediate superior to go to Georgetown, from there he can address his appeal to me."<sup>55</sup> From March 19, 1819 Father Malou kept his own *Record of*

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*Baptisms and Marriages* separate from the official St. Peter's parish Records, which contained entries to November 2, 1821. Between 1821 and 1825 there are no entries during his period of suspension. After the death of Bishop Connolly, however, in 1825, orders were received from Rome to restore the faculties of Father Malou.<sup>56</sup> He meanwhile had withdrawn from the Society of Jesus, which invited him in 1825 to return; but for motives which satisfied the General of the Order, he preferred to remain a secular priest. His *Register of Baptisms and Marriages* was resumed on April 11, 1825 and continued to August 17, 1827, when shortly after he died (October 13, 1827).

Cardinal McCloskey, who was prepared for First Communion by Father Malou, spoke with great affection in the later years of his life: "of the devotedness of this good priest, and told that during the six weeks his father's illness lasted [1820] Father Malou never allowed a day to pass without calling on the dying man."<sup>57</sup> In the newspapers of the day tribute was paid to his zeal and admirable charity to the poor.<sup>58</sup> In the correspondence of Pierre Toussaint, a most lovable and charitable Negro of New York, John Sorbieu wrote to Toussaint:

if he [Malou] goes away the French people are to be pitied, I speak of the Religious French, as for the others it is a matter of much indifference to them; the poor, as you say would stand a great loss as they have suffered a great loss by the departure of M. and Madame Deneuville.<sup>59</sup>

Father French promptly obeyed the order of Propaganda and left New York in March 1822; on the eve of his withdrawal, the Board of Trustees passed the following motion:

Resolved that we cannot Suffer the Rev. Charles French to retire from the Situation he holds as pastor of this Church without an Acknowledgment of his Exemplary Conduct and usefulness in his Ministry, during a term of Five Years, and an Expression of our unfeigned Regret in his Removal and the Hope which we fondly Cherish that the Separation will not be of Long Duration.<sup>60</sup>

After applying for and being refused by Bishop Plessis a place in the Diocese of Quebec, he sailed nevertheless to St. John's, N. B., to secure evidence refuting the charges brought against him.

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He published a pamphlet in his own defense.<sup>61</sup> For a time he taught school at St. John's and then went later to Boston, where as has already been shown, he led a priestly and successful life for many years.

In concluding the story of trusteeism at St. Peter's during this period, it must be said that financial difficulties, quarrels between trustees and ecclesiastics, and personal feuds between individuals of either class all pale before the one outstanding cause of dissension, distrust engendered by racial differences. All evidence points to the fact that these racial jealousies between French and Irish were the major factor in the aggravation of an unhappy situation.

During these days of divided leadership in the church, it was no easy task to raise sufficient money to support church, school and clergy. Receipts from pew rents naturally declined and the trustees were forced to appoint committees of their members to stand in the porches of both churches on Sundays to solicit donations. The clergy, accompanied by a committee of three in each ward of the city made a house to house collection of funds.<sup>62</sup>

On June 23, 1820 the joint boards of trustees issued an appeal to the Catholics of New York. It announced that the debt, the interest on which annually absorbed a large portion of the income, was \$45,000; that for the payment of this debt both churches were equally bound. It announced that the sashes and window frames over the approach of St. Peter's were decayed for lack of glaze and paint, and that

the paling that encloses the burying-ground of this church, always insufficient to resist the pressure of the high banks that fall on it from within, is also in many parts decayed and projected into the street, suffering the earth probably formed from the decomposition of human bodies to be exposed to public view. Decency, and the respect that is due to the memory of the persons buried in that ground, dictate the propriety of replacing the defective part in Barclay Street between the church and the free school with solid masonry, which it is purposed will be effected this year.<sup>63</sup>

On September 21, 1820 it was reported to the joint board of trustees that a search had been made to find whether the deeds

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conveying the lots on which St. Peter's and St. Patrick's were built, and also the burial grounds annexed respectively to those churches had been duly recorded. No record was found and no information as to who might have the deeds was available. A committee was accordingly appointed to make a thorough search in the books of the Register's office, and in case no record was found there, to make inquiries of such persons as might be deemed to have a knowledge of the location of the deeds. On September 25, the committee reported having found on record:

A Deed of Conveyance of ten lots of Ground from Aquila Gillis and Eliza his wife to St. Peter's Church bearing date the 14 of Jan 1803 and Recorded in Feby 1813 in Lib 104 page 465<sup>64</sup>

but that they did not find along with it the deed conveying the other ten lots from David Wagstaff, which together with the former property of Giles formed the twenty lots comprising the side of St. Patrick's Cathedral and the cemetery annexed to it. Furthermore, they could find no record of the deed of the lots "on which St. Peter's Church and its Burying Ground are placed." The committee, after calling upon Andrew Morris was informed by him that Thomas Stoughton possessed the deed to St. Peter's and that the Wagstaff conveyances were in the hands of James Lynch. They were duly recorded in the office of the Register of the City and County of New York on September 27, 1820.<sup>65</sup>



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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Bishop Connolly's *Diary*, cited in Bayley, *op. cit.*, 91.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>3</sup>Hughes, *op. cit.* (Documents), I, Part II, 994, n. 73. Hughes (*Ibid.*, 976, n. 13), estimates Malou's attitude in this controversy as a reflection of the opinion of Father Kohlmann, since Malou arrived too recently in the country to have formed a personal opinion of the situation.

<sup>4</sup>Patrick J. Dignan, "Peter Anthony Malou, Patriot and Priest (1753-1827)" *Records*, XLII, no. 4, 305 ff.

<sup>5</sup>Hughes, *op. cit.*, (Documents) I, Part 1, 367; Dignan, *loc. cit.*

<sup>6</sup>Archbishop Neale, of the Society, had died on June 18, 1817.

<sup>7</sup>Baltimore Cathedral Archives, Case 1807; referred to by Dignan, *loc. cit.*, 343.

<sup>8</sup>Baltimore Cathedral Archives, Case 22 B2.

<sup>9</sup>Dignan, *A History of the Legal Incorporation of Catholic Church Property in the United States*, 98.

<sup>10</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 132.

<sup>11</sup>*Memoranda of the Diocese of Boston*, begun by Bishop B. F. Fenwick, December 3, 1825 and continued by Bishop J. B. Fitzpatrick from August 7, 1846 to March 11, 1861. In the Boston Diocesan Archives, of which a photostat copy is in the possession of Father O'Daniel, Archives of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, D. C. Quotation under date of January 7, 1851.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 23, under date of November 24, 1826.

<sup>13</sup>Ethelred Taunton, *The Law of the Church*, cited in Dignan, *op. cit.*, 49.

<sup>14</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>15</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 51.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 64 f.

<sup>19</sup>Bishop Timon in *New York Times*, April 14, 1855; cited by Dignan, *op. cit.*, 66.

<sup>20</sup>Cited in Dignan, *op. cit.*, 109.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>22</sup>As Guilday considers it in "Trusteeism," *Records and Studies*, XVIII, 70.

<sup>23</sup>He meant the Irish. Carroll to Antonelli, March 18, 1788; *loc. cit.*

<sup>24</sup>Cited by Dignan, *op. cit.*, 96 f.

<sup>25</sup>Sorbieu to Toussaint, June 1, 1820, in French, translated in Leo R. Ryan's, "Pierre Toussaint, God's Image Carved in Ebony," *Records and Studies*, XXV, 53.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>27</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 76.

<sup>28</sup>According to Bishop Connolly, Malou feared that the Bishop might write to his religious Superior asking his recall from the diocese and for that reason wrote the Bishop a letter as follows:

"Je suis Religieux, et par conséquent sujet à la obéissance; mais mon honneur est compromis en matière la plus grave. Celui du Sacerdoce est compromis; la justice est compromise, et j'ose se dire le bon sens est compromis. Je suppose que par une exposition des choses *étudiée*, on engage mon Supérieur à me rappeler; je sçai que V. G. peut se porter à des plus grandes extrémités; me suspendre; m'excommunier peut-être; dans ce cas, vous ne ferez qu'aggraver vos difficultés. C'est le droit de la nature, contre le quel personne ne peut prescrire. Si mon Supérieur me rappelle,

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j'en appellerai a mon Supérieur immediat. Si V. G. procede plus avant, j'en appelle au tribunal supérieur, et si je y suis refuse, à Rome, *si reste quelque justice dans ce monde, je l'obtiendrai.*"

*Letter of Connolly to the Prefect of Propaganda, March 10, 1820 in Sommario, Atti, 1821.* Archives of the Propaganda; cf. Malou's correspondence, Baltimore Cathedral Archives, Case 22 B2.

<sup>28</sup>Petition of the Roman Catholics of the City of New York to the Holy Father, in the *Sommario, Atti, 1821*, folio 466.

<sup>30</sup>*Sommario, Atti, 1821.*

<sup>31</sup>Georgetown Archives, 25.11.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>Trustees to Maréchal, October 22, 1819; Georgetown Archives, 31.7.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup>Guilday, "Trusteeism," *Records and Studies*, XVIII, 56.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>38</sup>Broadside of Willcocks vs. Ffrench, March 30, 1819. Propaganda Archives, Amer. Centr. Scrittur. Refer., 925.

<sup>39</sup>Maréchal to Connolly, December 24, 1819. Georgetown Archives, 31.7.

<sup>40</sup>December 30, 1819, Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 58.

<sup>41</sup>October 18, 1818, Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 59.

<sup>42</sup>December 20, 1819. *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>44</sup>Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 65.

<sup>45</sup>Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 64 f.

<sup>46</sup>*Minutes of St. Peter's Church from April 3, 1820 to April 1, 1823.*

<sup>47</sup>Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 65.

<sup>48</sup>Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 59 f.

<sup>49</sup>Guilday, *loc. cit.*, 60.

<sup>50</sup>i quali, se non sono imbriaconi, lo divengon pei bon presto coll' esempio dei loro compatriotti. Dio non voglia però che s' intendano da noi compresi in questa classe tutti gl' Irlandesi, giachhè noi ne conosciamo un gran numero in tutte le classi, di buoni, i solidi negozianti, onesti artisti, e buoni Cristiani. A nome di questa Classe appunto, e d'accordo con tutti i Francesi, in gran numero, di alcuni Italiani, Spagnoli, ed Olandesi noi inoltriamo le nostre querele. In *Sommario, Atti, 1821*, f. 466.

<sup>51</sup>In the *Sommario, Atti, 1821* f. 466. Was his holding out for one priest against them an evidence of such weakness?

<sup>61</sup>*Atti, 1821.*

<sup>62</sup>In the Dubbi (Dubbio), *Atti, 1821.*

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup>Scrit. Refer. nei Congressi, Amer. Centr., Vol. 9, no. 7 (not folioed).

<sup>66</sup>Cardinal de Somaglia to Maréchal, May 7, 1825, Georgetown Archives, 31.9.

<sup>67</sup>Cardinal Farley, *The Life of John Cardinal McCloskey, First Prince of the Church in America, 1810-1885*, New York, Longmans, 1918, 18.

<sup>68</sup>*The Truth Teller*, III, 327; cited by Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 191.

<sup>69</sup>June 1, 1820 from Rouen. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 53 f.

<sup>70</sup>*Minute Book of St. Peter's*, April 3, 1820 to April 1, 1823.

<sup>71</sup>*A Short Memoir with Some Documents in Vindication of the Charges made by Malicious Persons against the Character of Rev. Charles Ffrench*, etc., St. John's, N. B., 1822.

<sup>72</sup>*Minutes of St. Patrick's Cathedral*, April 11, 1820-December 11, 1823.

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<sup>63</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 78 f.

<sup>64</sup>*Minutes of St. Patrick's Cathedral.*

<sup>65</sup>The deed to St. Peter's is recorded in Liber 146, page 274. *Minutes of St. Patrick's, April 11, 1820-December 11, 1823; Abstract of the Title of St. Peter's Church*, Chancery office, New York.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION:

REVEREND DR. JOHN POWER (1822-1849), AND REVEREND  
DR. CHARLES CONSTANTINE PISE (1849)

The successor to Father Ffrench as pastor of St. Peter's, the Reverend Dr. John Power, had been an assistant at the church since 1819. He was born at Roscarberry, Cork, Ireland, on June 19, 1792 and was educated in the local schools and at Maynooth. Among his classmates were John MacHale, the famous Archbishop of Tuam, and Father Theobald Mathew, the celebrated advocate of total abstinence. For a short time after his ordination, he was a professor in the Seminary at the Cove of Cork and curate of Youghal.<sup>1</sup> It was at the request of the Board of Trustees that he came to New York in 1819 and during the troublesome years that immediately followed his arrival at St. Peter's, he seems not to have been an active participant, except for his one unsuccessful attempt at intervention. Dr. Power was only thirty years of age at the time he became pastor and, except for the period when he administered the diocese during the absence of Bishop Dubois, he remained at St. Peter's until his death in 1849.

A man of great learning, piety and talent, possessed of remarkable oratorical ability, he used it for the benefit of many charitable causes. In the files of the *Truth Teller* and other papers of the period are found reports of charity sermons preached by him, particularly for the benefit of the Orphan Asylum under the direction of the Sisters of Charity, then located at Prince and Mott Streets. His sermons were regularly announced in advance, he preached to large audiences and secured considerable financial support for the causes he espoused.

On one of the occasions when he preached at St. Mary's, Philadelphia, for the benefit of St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum of that city, he raised nearly six hundred dollars and a diamond ring was thrown into the collection box by some lady as evidence



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of her feelings. The Philadelphia *National Gazette*, in reporting the incident, recalled his sermon for the benefit of the poor which had been preached in the same church two years previously, when the contribution was six hundred and sixty dollars, and remarked:

We do not know that there is a clergyman in the U. S., who has done more for indigent and suffering humanity or has been generally more successful in his appeals to the spirit of benevolence and Christianity, than this favorite Catholic Minister of New York. By his exertions he has been chiefly instrumental in the establishment in that city of an asylum in which 150 destitute orphans are supported and educated. These are fine fruits of pious and generous zeal, united with superior natural endowments of mind, and the rhetoric of high culture and character.<sup>2</sup>

On behalf of the Polish exiles, who arrived in America during the early 'thirties, he made a stirring appeal at the request of Bishop Dubois. He took for his text the first Epistle of St. John, III, 17: "he that hath the substance of this world and shall see his brother in need and shall shut his bowels from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him?" After conclusively proving the obligation to be charitable,

when he recommended the many wrongs of Poland, and the degrading, despotic, and tyrannical acts which roused her sons to the struggle in which many of them proved

"Some of the free the vainly brave.

Who die for the land they cannot save"

his soul seemed to glow with patriotism, and the patriotic spark sought the heart of every individual of the numerous audience. There was, then no studied and hypocritical language, no affected feeling; every word was fraught with sympathy, and every sentence with laudable enthusiasm. We feel confident that those of our readers who were present on the occasion, appreciated the services of Dr. Power as highly as we do; and we point to the amount collected, as a convincing proof that his exertions proved eminently successful.<sup>3</sup>

From the first, Dr. Power possessed and reciprocated the friendship of Bishop England, of Charleston, who arrived in New York from that city on September 2, 1821. He celebrated Mass at St. Peter's and remained a guest of Dr. Power for six weeks.

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Bishop England's purpose in coming to New York, as he says, was to publish the missal in English with an explanatory text.<sup>4</sup> During his stay here he preached three times at St. Patrick's and on October 13, at the residence of Dr. Power, he had a conference with Bishop Conwell, of Philadelphia, about the Hogan schism that was agitating the Church in that city. Bishop Conwell urged his confrère to accept Father Hogan into his diocese as a solution of the situation in Philadelphia. Bishop England, with Dr. Power as his secretary, accordingly left New York on October 15 and remained in Philadelphia until October 20, attempting to reconcile priests, trustees, and Bishop. The attempt, however, ended in failure, and had the effect of only adding fuel to the fire. Dr. Power in writing to the Bishop of Quebec, indicated the outcome:

The Bishop of Charleston made a great effort to steal him out of Philadelphia, but all to no purpose, for after consenting to go to Charleston, and giving up Philadelphia, *in scriptis*, his irreligious Trustees prevailed on him not to leave them. The efforts I myself made to take him away from them, have brought on me their odium, for which I care but little.<sup>5</sup>

Some knowledge of the progress of the church by the beginning of the pastorate of Dr. Power may be gained from *The Laity's Directory to the Church Service*, which was published by William H. Creagh in 1822 and which was revised and corrected by the "Reverend John Power, of St. Peter's Church, New York." In 1821 the territory of the United States was divided into one archdiocese and seven dioceses. The Diocese of New York still embraced the whole State of New York, "together with the northern parts of Jersey." It possessed nine priests, four of whom were in New York City. This number included Bishop Connolly; Fathers O'Gorman, at the Cathedral; Ffrench and Power at St. Peter's; Richard Bulger at Patterson; Michael Carroll at Albany and its vicinity; John Farnan at Utica and its environs; Patrick Kelly at Auburn, Rochester, and other places in the Western part of the State; and Philip Lariscy, an Augustinian, who regularly attended at Staten Island and other congrega-

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tions along the Hudson River. The diocese possessed only seven churches, namely, the two in New York City, one each in Albany, Utica, Auburn, Patterson and Carthage.

Brooklyn, which was not even mentioned in the *Directory* was visited occasionally by Dr. Power. In a circular addressed to William Purcell, James McLaughlin and several other Catholics of Brooklyn by Peter Turner, who was the organizer of the first Catholic church there, he said on January 1, 1822:

Rev. Dr. Power was our first friend, and remained such to the last, he frequently came over and celebrated Mass, and preached for us in private houses and elsewhere, winter and summer, and sent clergymen over whenever it was possible to do so.<sup>6</sup>

In the following year, Dr. Power preached at the dedication of St. James' Church, in Brooklyn, which was blessed by Bishop Connolly. As yet, however, it had no regularly assigned pastor, since the number of priests was so small that Bishop Connolly himself had to perform parish duties. Although he ordained the Reverend Charles Brennan<sup>7</sup> in 1822 and the Reverend John Shanahan in the following year, he was broken hearted by the death within a week of each other of Fathers O'Gorman and Bulger, both residing with him in November 1824. A glimpse of the situation in which the seventy-five year old prelate was placed is contained in a letter of Bishop Fenwick, of Cincinnati:

My poor brother Bishop Connolly, . . . is much distressed for want of priests, he has lately lost two of his best priests who lived with him, both died eight or ten days ago, he has but one at St. Peter's, and another lately ordained, drudges night and day to the sick, &c. last night I turned out for him for I will not allow him to get up in the night as long as I can stay here.<sup>8</sup>

The shock was too much for the aged man. He tried to fulfill the increased duties that devolved upon him, and although he took sick shortly after Father O'Gorman's death, he continued to officiate. At a burial in January he was prostrated and he died on February 5, 1825. The body remained in state for two days at St. Peter's, where a solemn Mass of requiem was celebrated,



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and his remains were conveyed to St. Patrick's Cathedral, where they were interred near the altar.

Two days before his death, Bishop Connolly appointed Dr. Power Vicar General, and in case of death, Administrator of the Diocese of New York.<sup>9</sup> During his administratorship, Father Malou was restored and assigned to St. Peter's, and Father Taylor, having left Boston in December, 1825 intending, it is said, to proceed to France, remained in the city and was appointed by Dr. Power as joint pastor of St. Patrick's. His co-rector was the Reverend Thomas C. Levins, formerly a Jesuit who taught mathematics at Georgetown. A man of learning and ability, he arrived in 1825 and was for a short time assigned to St. Peter's before assuming the rectorship of the Cathedral.<sup>10</sup>

Another priest whom Dr. Power received into the diocese was the famous Cuban patriot and exile, the Reverend Felix Varela. Having been a professor in the University of San Carlos in Havana, and also a Cuban deputy in the Cortes at Madrid, he protested against the overthrow of the government under the Constitution of 1822 for which he was proscribed. He came to the United States in 1823, arriving first at Philadelphia and from 1825 to 1827 was an assistant at St. Peter's.

Dr. Power lent his assistance to the establishment of the *Truth Teller*, a pioneer Catholic journal of the period, published in New York on April 2, 1825 by William Denman and George Pardow. It continued under this joint proprietorship until January 2, 1830, when Denman became the sole proprietor until 1855. Denman in the early days of the paper had the assistance not only of Dr. Power, but also of Fathers Levins, Varela, and others but during the time of Bishop Dubois it espoused the trustee cause against the bishop and in 1833 Fathers Schneller and Levins brought out a rival, the *Weekly Register and Catholic Diary*.

Dr. Power, as has been indicated, was particularly interested in the progress of the work of the Sisters of Charity in maintaining the orphan asylum. When the Sisters came in 1817, they were established in a small wooden building on Prince Street near the Cathedral. Five children were confided to their care. The administrator, however, realizing the growing needs of the



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institution, gathered funds by giving lectures; enlisted the co-operation of Bishop England, who delivered a discourse while in New York; and persuaded the famous Felicia Garcia (Madame Malibran), of the Garcia Italian Opera Company, which was then in New York, to give an oratorio at the Cathedral.<sup>11</sup> With the funds thus secured, he was able to complete a three-story brick structure, suitable for the accommodation of 160 orphans. It was dedicated on November 23, 1826, and it immediately served the needs of 150 charges under the supervision of the Sisters.

During his administration of the Diocese, the growth of population in the city proper led to a further division of the parish of St. Peter—which originally embraced the whole of the Diocese. In 1826 the old Presbyterian church on Sheriff Street was purchased and remodelled for Catholic use. The Reverend Patrick McGilligan was first assigned to the charge, but upon his return to mission work in the region of Plattsburg, the Reverend Hatton Walsh was appointed pastor, and the Church of St. Mary was formally opened in May, 1826.

Showing such energy and enthusiasm in his care of the diocese and having successfully accomplished so much good work in a short time, it was the popular belief that Dr. Power would become the next bishop. Propaganda had already solicited the American bishops for recommendation of worthy candidates. Bishop England proposed Power; but the majority of other votes of the American hierarchy favored either Fathers Benedict Fenwick or John Dubois. The French element in New York actively espoused the cause of Father William Taylor.<sup>12</sup> The American hierarchy felt that between Fenwick and Dubois, Fenwick would be the better choice, in order to retain Father Dubois, in his important work as President of Mount St. Mary's College. Propaganda decided otherwise, however, and on October 29, 1826 His Holiness confirmed the nomination of the worthy Sulpician priest.

He was consecrated at Baltimore on October 29 by Archbishop Maréchal, and the sermon was preached by Father William Taylor. Taylor caused great excitement by bluntly referring to the situation created by the appointment, one description of his sermon being as follows:

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He spoke at some length upon the improper means resorted to, to procure the appointment of Bishops for this country and addressing himself to Bp. Dubois he said, notwithstanding all his good qualities, his appointment over a people almost exclusively Irish, was a bold and hazardous experiment and one which would or might sever the people from the centre of unity, were it not for the exertion and influence of Irish priests and particularly the influence of that gentleman on his left (Mr. Power) on whom he would recommend him to rest as the pillar to support his throne. He said he had no partiality for French or Irish; he condemned the policy that brought or would bring from an obscure parish in Ireland a Bishop for one of our populous cities, as much as he did the appointment of an unfit person from any other country; either were an infliction upon the Church and we need not go many leagues to see the effects of such appointments—the Bp. of Philadelphia was present—Judge of the shock produced by such a discourse. In every instance I may not have just the precise words of the orator, but there is very little difference.<sup>13</sup>

John Talbot Smith, in summarizing the effect produced by the sermon, says:

This rather harrowing picture of the unfavorable conditions in New York struck a chill to the heart of the bishop. He was much relieved on getting to New York that there were no signs of rebellion. He was installed in his cathedral on the Sunday within the octave of All Saints, when Father Power preached the sermon and resigned the administration into his hands. His reception was frigid. The people who listened to the known and beloved Father Power resigning his office had dreamed of seeing him their bishop on this day; and here was a stranger and a Frenchman on the throne!<sup>14</sup>

Bishop Dubois felt, however, shortly after his arrival that the "frightful prognostications" of Father Taylor had "vanished like smoke." Nevertheless, in his first pastoral he answered the unfounded charge that he had been nominated through the influence of Archbishop Maréchal and the Sulpician Fathers. He showed that the Archbishop, far from supporting, had actually opposed his promotion to the See of New York because of the harm it would do St. Mary's College and that the Sulpicians like himself, were ignorant of his appointment until the Bulls arrived. As-

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suring his flock that, far from considering his elevation a reward, he considered it a last sacrifice to duty and religion, since he had to yield a comparatively happy and independent situation to the fatiguing honor of governing the diocese. Referring to the objection of his foreign birth raised against him he replied that he considered thirty-five years spent in the toils of the American mission and of public education as giving him the right to be considered an American. And among the objectors, who were there who were not, in the same sense, foreigners themselves? "For, the question was not Why an American had not been appointed, but why it was not an Irishman?"<sup>15</sup> He declared that the same affection and devotion he gave the sons of Erin at Mount St. Mary's, which took them, friendless, to its bosom and educated them, when there was no particular obligation to serve them, would not cease to be so, when his duty as Bishop and his feelings attached them all the more so to him as a portion of his flock.<sup>16</sup>

An evidence of the cold reception the *Pastoral* received was the fact that it was not published in the Catholic paper of New York, the *Truth Teller*. It may be said that the opposition to Bishop Dubois, besides the disappointment consequent upon the failure of Dr. Power to receive the nomination, was the fact that he spoke English so poorly. Dr. Power said of him: "Doctor Dubois is thirty-six years in America, and when he attempts to give common instructions, thirty-six out of three thousand cannot understand a word of what he says."<sup>17</sup>

On Sunday, November 12, 1826, Father Taylor preached his validictory sermon in St. Patrick's Cathedral, and three days later embarked for Havre, to reside with Archbishop Cheverus of Bordeaux.<sup>18</sup> He shortly thereafter succumbed to a dropsical affection and died at Paris, August 1, 1828, aged 39 years.<sup>19</sup>

St. Peter's Church in 1827 lost a part of its congregation by the establishment of a new parish church on Ann Street. At that time, Christ Episcopal Church was unoccupied and offered for sale. Father Varela of St. Peter's, who meanwhile had mastered English, purchased the edifice in March with his own funds and the assistance given to him by Spanish merchants and friends.



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After the necessary repairs were made Christ Church was dedicated on July 15, 1827 by Bishop Dubois.

About this time many Irish Catholic immigrants labored on canal construction projects throughout the States. At Windsor Locks, Connecticut a number were working on the Enfield Canal. One of them came to New York for Dr. Power and in August he went there to minister to a sick laborer and also said Mass in an open field. On his way to and from the Enfield Canal, he stopped at Hartford where he celebrated Mass, baptized some children, and visited Catholics living at Wapping on the east side of the river. He returned to Windsor Locks in October, where he preached, said Mass and conducted a sort of mission. On his way back from Windsor Locks on one of these occasions, having missed his boat, he celebrated Mass at New Haven to the great joy of the small band of Catholics there.<sup>20</sup>

In the summer of 1828, Dr. Power accompanied Bishop Dubois on a visitation of the diocese, reaching as far West as Buffalo and North as St. Regis.<sup>21</sup> At this time, New York City possessed four Catholic churches, St. Peter's, St. Patrick's, St. Mary's and Christ Church. Steps were being taken to erect another in Greenwich Village. Besides St. James' in Brooklyn, there was one at Paterson, another being erected at Newark, and still another at Macoupin. Father Joseph Schneller, who was ordained by Bishop Dubois in December 1827, was collecting for a church in New Brunswick. Albany was building its second church, Utica and Carthage each had one; Troy and Salina were erecting churches; Auburn had one; Rochester had its priest and church, and Buffalo was pushing the erection of theirs.<sup>22</sup>

Yet with these signs of progress, the Bishop was hampered on all sides by the crippling influence of trusteeism. Already he had been unjustly accused of interfering in elections of trustees and of having the deed to Christ Church made out to him as Bishop. With the necessity of building a seminary and college, schools for boys, a hospital, particularly for immigrants, an asylum and above all, churches throughout his vast diocese, he found himself checkmated by trustees who offered him no support unless he surrendered management of affairs to them.



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While they still pretended to yield obedience to him in spiritual matters, they endeavored under the plea that their consciences would not permit them to pay the money of the congregation to persons unacceptable to them, to interfere in the appointment of clergymen, and to force such priest as they became attached to upon the Bishop.<sup>23</sup>

For example, *The Minutes of St. Peter's Church*, indicate that the Reverend William McNamara, who was an assistant in 1827, had his salary reduced by the Board of Trustees, who inquired by letter if he was willing to continue on the reduced amount.<sup>24</sup> In a letter to the board he called attention to the original agreement and asked the cause of the reduction, whereupon the trustees construed his answer as a declination and resolved that his salary cease on August 16, 1827.<sup>25</sup> A typical example of the working of the system is that a project at this time for the establishment of a French church fell through because the subscribers insisted that it be made a joint stock concern, the shares of which could be bought and sold!

Bishop Dubois unable to secure the funds he needed at home, successfully appealed to the Society for the Propagation of the Faith for support of some of his projects and decided to visit Europe on a tour of solicitation. Although the First Provincial Council of Baltimore was held in the autumn of 1829, he sailed away to Havre in September with the purpose in view of securing money and priests to enlarge the work of his diocese. During his absence he appointed Dr. Power and Father Varela as his Vicars General. The appointment of the latter, in view of the coldness between Dr. Power and the Bishop, intensified, according to John Talbot Smith, the feeling in New York against the Bishop, since it was construed as an intended rebuke to Dr. Power.<sup>26</sup>

During the absence of the Bishop, Dr. Power, as Vicar General, was stationed at the Cathedral and his place at St. Peter's was temporarily occupied by the Reverend James Smith as acting pastor (1829-1831).<sup>27</sup>

It was during this interval that Alexis de Tocqueville, accompanied by his life-long friend Gustave de Beaumont made a tour of America (1831-32), on a commission of the French gov-

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ernment to examine conditions of prisons and penitentiaries. He returned and made his report but the important result of his visit was the publication, in 1835, of his famous *Democracy in America*.

During the tour that De Tocqueville and Beaumont made, they acquired many contacts and friendships, especially with certain Catholic priests,

who appear to have aided them greatly in their efforts to understand the religious temperament and condition of the American people in general, and the prospects of the Catholic Church here in particular. Among the scattered references to nearly two hundred American acquaintances, in the Tocqueville and Beaumont papers, appear repeatedly the names of John Power, Vicar in the absence of Bishop DuBois from New York; James Mullon, missionary priest from Cincinnati; and Gabriel Richard, of Detroit. And enough additional material is given in the Tocqueville records to indicate that these members of the Church may have had a deep influence on the thought of the two French travelers as regards religion in America; and may in this way have contributed materially to Tocqueville's famous book.<sup>28</sup>

The travellers reached New York City in May 1831, and immediately sought out the Bishop. Bishop Dubois was absent, of course, in Europe and his Vicar General was not available at the time. It was not until the ninth of June that De Tocqueville and Beaumont had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Power. During the course of several conversations that ensued, a discussion of the character and function of the Catholic Church in a democratic country was particularly appreciated by De Tocqueville. It was Dr. Power who first suggested to the travellers that they take the trip to Canada, which later proved so interesting to them. In the De Tocqueville manuscripts, which hitherto have not been published, are the following references to their meeting:

De Tocqueville, *Diary* note, 9 June 1831:

There are 95,000 Catholics in New York. There weren't as many as 30 fifty years ago. Mr. Powers (grand vicar) says that their number increases daily through conversions. They already form the most numerous *communion*.

What struck me most in Mr. Powers' conversation is:

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1. That he appears to have no prejudice against republican institutions, 2. That he regards education as favorable to morality and religion.

De Tocqueville letter to his mother, New York, 19 June 1831:

. . . Canada piques our curiosity keenly, the French nation has kept itself intact there. They have the customs and language of the century of Louis XIV. It's Mr. Powers, the grand vicar of New York of whom I think I spoke, who above all has counselled us this trip. He has lived a long time in Canada and has offered us letters of introduction for that country.

Mr. Powers is a very likable man who was brought up in France and speaks French almost as well as his own tongue. On the progress being made by Catholicism in this part of the world he has told us some very fascinating things which I shall repeat another time when I have more leisure. It's he in part who made us change our first plan which was to go west in the autumn. In that season one often catches there *la fièvre tierce* because of the quantity of water which is to be found there and part of which the summer sun has drawn up. The seaboard and Pennsylvania are the healthiest places in the world all year long. I only reproach them with being too hot. We have here a prostrating heat which, however, is not unusual for the climate. . . .<sup>29</sup>

The number of Catholics put by De Tocqueville in New York as 95,000 probably refers to the State of New York, since Dr. Power was Vicar General of the State-wide Diocese. Yet it does not correspond with the figures of Bishop Dubois, who estimated in March, 1830 that there were at least 35,000 Catholics in the city and "probably 150,000 throughout the rest of the diocese:"

I say probably, yet it may be that the number is still greater. In all the sections where I send my missionaries, or which I visit personally, I find ten times as many Catholics as I expected. Seven hundred are found where I understood there were but fifty or sixty; eleven hundred, where I was told to look for two hundred.<sup>30</sup>

Bishop Dubois returned from Europe in November 1831, encouraged by the financial aid given him by the Holy Father for the erection of a seminary and college and also by the assistance



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rendered by the Association for the Propagation of the Faith. He received both money and books as the nucleus of a library, but did not succeed in inducing any Religious Order to accompany him hither.

On his return to New York, he was to face not only the dissensions caused by the trustee system but also the rapid growth of a nation-wide hostility to the Church. The total population of Catholics by 1830 variously estimated as high as 600,000<sup>31</sup> placed the Church as one of the most numerous, if not the largest, Christian bodies in the United States. The Methodists, as the largest Protestant denomination, totalled about 421,000. There seemed to be no unity possible for the various sects of Protestantism at the time except upon the basis of a platform of anti-Catholicism.<sup>32</sup> The first attempt at such unity occurred in 1829 when a group of clergymen of New York and elsewhere established in February 1830, the *Protestant*, for the purpose of awakening their co-religionists to the dangerous "interests and pretensions of the Roman Catholic Church" among them. As a result of the campaign of calumny and vituperation of the "Protestant Association" no less than thirteen defensive Catholic newspapers and magazines were established between 1829 and 1833.<sup>33</sup>

The Catholic Emancipation Act of England in 1829 was undoubtedly the occasion for much of this feeling. The Orange Society which began its career in Ireland in 1795 and which was dissolved by the English Parliament in 1813, enjoyed new strength after the victory of O'Connell. A lodge was established in New York as early as 1824, Orangemen were convicted in New York for causing an anti-Catholic riot in Greenwich Village.

In 1831, St. Mary's Church, New York, was made the first of a series of incendiary outbreaks by fanatical bigots. The church was robbed, the bell secured to prevent its being rung and the edifice set on fire in three places. When the alarm was sounded, it was too late to prevent the flames from completely destroying the structure.<sup>34</sup> When work began on the Church of St. Joseph in Greenwich Village, the men of the parish had to guard the site at night lest it be destroyed before morning. Father Varela,



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in his letters, told of a projected attack on St. Patrick's Cathedral, which was prepared for secretly by tearing up the streets in the immediate vicinity, and placing armed men in the church and graveyard, so that when the vanguard of the attackers ran into these signs of trouble they precipitously withdrew.<sup>35</sup> The Nyack Seminary which was begun in 1832 was burned down in 1834 just as it was nearing completion. Whether or not it was the work of an incendiary was not clearly determined at the time.<sup>36</sup>

In the literary field, anti-Catholic literature, particularly of the notorious *Maria Monk* and *Andrew Dunn* variety had wide circulation. Hatred of the Faith, political and economic opposition to the ever-growing immigrant groups, of which the Irish were the largest, and ignorance thus led to the beginnings of the Know Nothing movement.

The literary outpourings of the *Protestant* did not receive a unanimous welcome in non-Catholic circles. In Baltimore, for example, no newspaper would publish its prospectus, and "its scurrility was so gross" that it disgusted many who were originally interested in the cause it espoused.<sup>37</sup> Cultured leaders of Protestantism disclaimed it as an organ of their churches. In 1832 the *Protestant* began the formation of branches in every city of the American Protestant Association "for the purpose of exposing the evils of Popery and defending the principles of the Reformation." The effect of this campaign was to revive among Protestants and Catholics an interest in Catholic doctrine and history.

One of the organizers and leaders of the Protestant Association was the Reverend Doctor Brownlee of New York. Because of his activity, Dr. Power and Father Varela were led in a series of controversial discussions and writings. Varela, who was an outstanding theologian and the author of several widely circulated works in Spanish, as well as a contributor to English papers and periodicals, accepted an invitation to defend Catholic doctrine before an assembly of ministers, presided over by Doctor Brownlee. "Finding the audience completely astonished and convinced by the reasoning of the talented Cuban ecclesiastic," Doctor Brownlee "endeavored to persuade the meeting that Father Varela

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had stated what was not Catholic doctrine, and that he would be surely suspended by his bishop."<sup>38</sup>

In the *Truth Teller* of 1832 several letters to Doctor Brownlee appeared, signed by "C. S. D."<sup>39</sup> These were followed in the next volume by a letter exposing the assertions of Brownlee.<sup>40</sup> He then issued a challenge to discussion which was accepted by Dr. Power and also by Fathers Varela and Levins.<sup>41</sup> Bishop Dubois declined to accept because he felt that no good could result from such encounters and regretted that the situation had so far advanced that controversy was unavoidable. He nevertheless did not interfere with those of his clergy who accepted. From February to the end of the year 1833, there appeared letters written either by Brownlee, Power, Varela or Levins, including a few composed by other interested parties.<sup>42</sup>

In the summer of 1832 the dreaded Asiatic cholera ravaged the cities and towns of the Atlantic seaboard. In St. Peter's and other churches of the city, regular Masses on Sunday depended on the sick calls made by the priests and the clergy were so exhausted by their devoted labors that the trustees at the request of Dr. Power, appropriated a carriage for their use during the prevalence of the disease.<sup>43</sup> Besides Father Smith, among the priests who served at St. Peter's at this time, were Fathers Schneller (1829); William Quarter (1830-1832); Gregory Bryan Pardow (1832); Bernard O'Reilly, who attended New Brunswick once a month from August to November 1832; and James A. Neill, who began his service in 1832 and remained until 1836.

Father Neill, born in the parish, was the first native son of New York to be ordained a priest.

The Congregation of St. Peter had each year increased with considerable rapidity. Even though in 1836 there were six churches and chapels in the city and one in the course of erection, Bishop Dubois reported the need of twelve more, if the means of erecting them were available. So crowded was St. Peter's and other of the city churches that half the congregations heard Mass outside the vestibules.<sup>44</sup> As Thomas O'Connor, a trustee, put it "St. Peter's overflowed."<sup>45</sup> As early as 1834 the old brick church with its square tower and dome that had served the needs

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of Catholics for fifty years began to be regarded by some as no longer safe. To enlarge or to rebuild had been for years a favorite topic of conversation; but the inadequacy of means or doubts as to the best course to pursue led the trustees from time to time to defer action.<sup>46</sup> An inspection of the building was made on April 8, 1836 by three competent builders, who reported "that it was unsafe for a congregation to assemble in said church in its present condition." The correctness of this report was further verified by the information contained in the following issue of the *Truth Teller*:

A portion of the ceiling of St. Peter's church in Barclay street gave way on Wednesday last, and fell into the body of the church.<sup>47</sup> The Trustees immediately amended to the subject, and an inspection of the ceiling and roof was made by competent architects. The following is the result.

Judging from the manner of framing the roof, it would appear that it was designed to make a circular ceiling. Had this design been pursued, it is quite probable the ceiling would have remained firm. It is supposed that the design of a circular ceiling was abandoned in favor of that which was subsequently adopted. The timbers necessary to meet this change were too slight for the purpose, and were of inferior quality. It is probable that the remainder of the ceiling would continue in its place but to provide full security against danger to the congregation, and to prevent all cause of alarm, the entire plastering of the flat portion of the ceiling has been removed. The architect is of opinion that no change exists as to the roof.

The church will be open for divine service, as usual, on Sunday next (Tomorrow) and on the succeeding Sundays until contracts can be made for the erection of a new building, which will be proceeded on with the least possible delay, the preliminary measures are at present in quick progress.

The Trustees expect, before the termination of the present year, to present to their constituents, the congregation of St. Peter's church, an edifice, spacious, convenient, and splendid. The countenance and support of the congregation will not be withheld; such is the confident reliance of the Trustees.<sup>48</sup>

On May 22, 1836, Dr. Power preached a special sermon to collect funds for the erection of a new church. Asserting that the trustees were well disposed to act their part, he asked the



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cooperation of the congregation. Seats were reserved for strangers who wanted to attend the sermon which had been advertised in advance.<sup>49</sup>

A resolution to rebuild was passed on June 5, 1836 and the next day the removal of the earth was commenced. St. Peter's burying ground, which surrounded the church, and which was the first Catholic cemetery in New York had to be used for the foundations of the new structure. The remains of many members of the oldest Catholic families were accordingly reinterred in the Cathedral ground.<sup>50</sup>

On August 9, workmen began to lay the foundation stones of the new church and the last Mass was celebrated in old St. Peter's on August 28, 1836. By the middle of October, the massive walls of the new edifice were already beginning to rise above the basement and on Wednesday October 26, 1836, the cornerstone was laid by Bishop Dubois on which occasion Doctor Power preached an eloquent discourse.

In 1837, Bishop Dubois, now seventy-three years of age and feeling the weight of his responsibility felt compelled to ask for a coadjutor. Dr. Power, who had been suggested as a candidate to succeed Bishop Connolly had lost none of the prestige and popularity in the eleven years since the consecration of Bishop Dubois. A letter of Father McGerry written to Archbishop Cullen of Dublin, from Nyack College, in 1834, attested his worth:

The grand fault here is that there exists no *Esprit de Corps* among our Clergy; and that our good and truly holy and apostolic Bishop is not aided by those who should be his advisers. Could it be the Very Revd. Dr. Power were appointed his Coadjutor, all would then go well. He is the only one in the Diocese worthy and capable of the office. His learning, talents and popularity will ensure to Religion a triumph. But unfortunately there are those who endeavor to persuade the good Bishop to the contrary.<sup>51</sup>

The *Truth Teller*, in May 1834, in commenting upon the deserving honor conferred by Georgetown College by awarding Dr. Power the degree of Doctor of Divinity, made this gracious recommendation for the bishopric:



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As Catholics of New York we feel proud of the dignity so justly bestowed on Doctor Power, for we have long known his great and good services in the cause of religion,—his unbounded ardour and untiring zeal in discharging the duties of his sacred Ministry. Disrespect to others is not meant when we say, that, to none is the present elevation of the Catholic religion in this city so mainly owing as to Dr. Power. He is its soul and life. He has nurtured it,—he has educated it. Early and late, in the pest-air of the summer's sun, in the snows of winter, he has been its minister—always at his post,—always in the field. This is not the language of flattery,—not the words of fiction. Every Catholic in this city will attest their truth. But, if there be just cause to be proud of the Priest who has been faithful to his sacred duties,—there is also reason to exult in the eminent talents and learning, which even the jaundiced-eye and envious heart, must concede to him. Possessing mental abilities of the first order from nature, he passed through his theological studies with the highest distinctions;—and, as a proof of that his was not an empty reputation, he was at the age of twenty-three years, selected by a full board of Bishops at Maynooth College, Doctor Murray the present Archbishop of Dublin presiding, as the Professor of Theology on the Dunboyne Establishment. We sincerely wish him length of years to wear his well-earned honors;—and hope, that ere long and in the scenes of his sixteen years missionary toils, he will ascend to that dignity which his virtues can honor and his talents make illustrious.<sup>52</sup>

In 1836 Bishop Conwell of Philadelphia wrote to Bishop Dubois to entertain a project to make Dr. Power a Bishop by each Bishop relinquishing the respective parts of their dioceses in New Jersey and petitioning the Holy See for the creation of the Diocese of Trenton.

Furthermore, it may be said that Dr. Power had in Bishop England a faithful and steady advocate. In a letter to Archbishop Eccleston of Baltimore on February 27, 1837 he said :

I need not conceal my conviction notwithstanding the difference of opinion of one whom I respect, that Doctor Power ought to have been Bishop instead of Doctor Dubois. I knew in Ireland Doctor Power during twenty-five years, and I know how he stood, how he stands here, and how he has been treated, as also I know what he is. The present effort is to

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keep him out from succeeding upon a vacancy by filling the place with a coadjutor. This is the true meaning of the movement and you are greatly deceived if you have not been told that the people of New York know it, and are determined to resist it. Neither you nor I nor Power himself can change this determination. . . . Doctor Dubois is just as fit this moment to be Bishop of New York as he was the day you nominated him. And if one mistake has been made, it would be a poor motive for perpetuating the mischief. If you will not or cannot appoint Doctor Power, have patience and let time at least produce more favorable circumstances. You will pardon me if in my confidence I have written indiscreetly. Doctor Power is not the ambitious man who would ruin the church to grasp a mitre. I know that he does not wish his juniors and strangers to be placed over him, but I also know that he is ready to join in promoting a good appointment to his own exclusion;<sup>53</sup>

The first choice of Bishop Dubois, however, was the Right Reverend Francis P. Kenrick, then coadjutor of Philadelphia. The procedure regulated by the Second Provincial Council held in Baltimore in 1833, directed a bishop desiring a coadjutor to submit three names to the Bishops in council. Bishop Dubois proposed the Reverend Thomas Mulledy, S.J., and the Reverend John Hughes as second and third choices respectively. When Bishop Dubois was summoned to attend the Provincial Council in 1837, he wrote to be excused and sent Vicar General Felix Varela to represent him.

When the names of the suggested candidates reached Pope Gregory XVI, he selected as coadjutor Father Hughes, then pastor of St. John's Church, Philadelphia, who had been a seminarian under Bishop Dubois at Mount St. Mary's. He was consecrated in St. Patrick's Cathedral on January 7, 1838 as Bishop of Basileopolis *in partibus infidelium* and Coadjutor to the Bishop of New York, by Bishop Dubois assisted by Bishop Kenrick, and Bishop Fenwick of Boston. Father Mulledy preached on the occasion.

Meanwhile, the building of St. Peter's was urged forward with more haste than economy. On September 3, 1837 the first Mass was celebrated in the basement of the new church. By the be-

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ginning of the next year the interior was completed and on Sunday, February 25, 1838 the church was solemnly blessed by Bishop Coadjutor Hughes, with Dr. Power preaching the sermon.

The very reverend pastor, in a strain of eloquence in which it may be said he exceeded himself, preached to an audience of more than four thousand persons, who occupied not only every pew but all the aisles and every spot where man could find a place to sit or stand. Many were excluded for want of further space.<sup>54</sup>

The church, the exterior of which was not completed until August 1840, was of Grecian architecture, a style which has never since been adopted by the Catholic churches in New York City. It excited considerable comment at the time, and the marble tabernacle, a representation of the church itself, and the movable pulpit, appeared strange to many. The Reverend Dr. Charles Constantine Pise, who became an assistant pastor in the church in 1839, on the day of the celebration of the third anniversary of the dedication of the church, entered into an elaborate defense of the architecture, showing that the views of Bishop Milner, author of *The End of Controversy*, had been followed. On that same occasion, when Bishop Dubois celebrated a pontifical high Mass, Thomas O'Connor said:

This was a glorious day for the Catholics of New York. A church of great architectural beauty, of studied solidity in all its parts, in size more than double that of the church that had been lately removed, was, at great expense, built within little more than one year. This edifice, a monument of the zeal and public spirit of the congregation, is not only a great convenience to ourselves, but an ornament to the city, elevating the Catholics, both as men and as Christians, in the esteem and respect of their dissenting brethren.<sup>55</sup>

The original congregation of St. Peter's in 1785 was the nucleus from which in 1840 sixty thousand Catholics worshipped in nine churches of the city, namely, St. Peter's, St. Patrick's, St. Mary's, St. Joseph's, St. James', Transfiguration, St. Nicholas, the cornerstone of which was laid by Dr. Power in the same year that of St. Peter's (1836), and St. Paul's, Harlem, from which St. Ignatius' Chapel on East Fiftieth Street was attended as an outmission.<sup>56</sup>



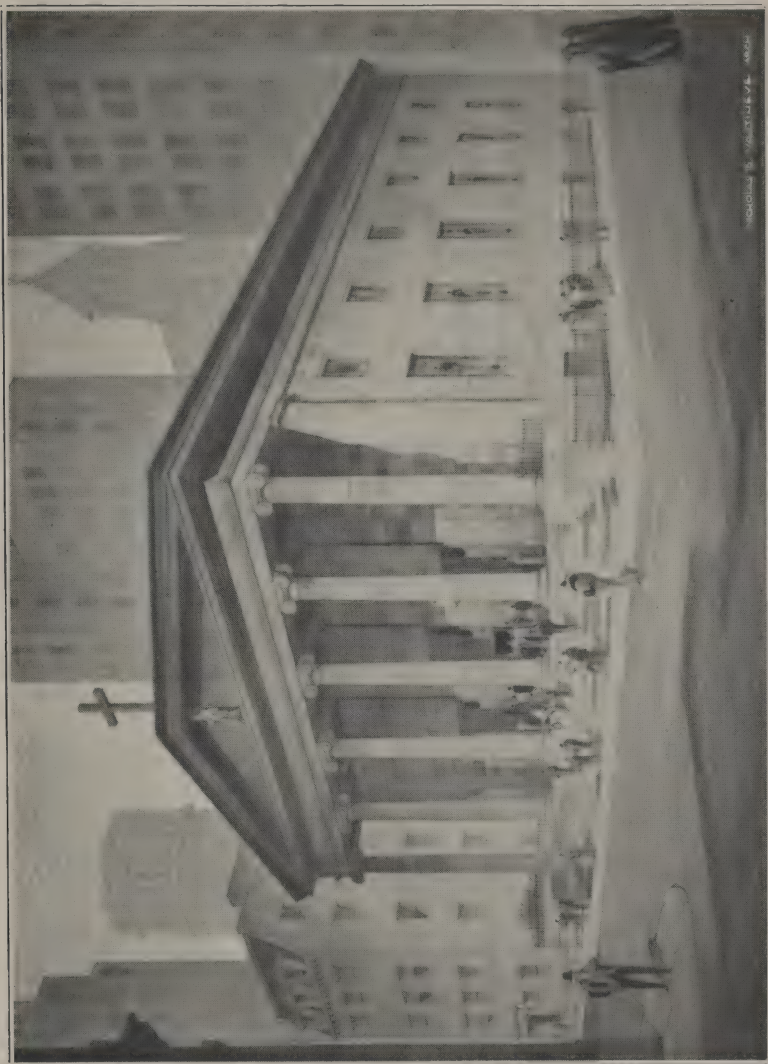
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In 1838 the Society of St. Peter was organized whose object was to help liquidate the debt incurred by the rebuilding of the church. The illness of Dr. Power, its president, however, which necessitated his absence from St. Peter's,<sup>57</sup> added to other unfavorable circumstances, operated against the society for on November 16, 1839 Dr. Power issued a printed invitation to members of the congregation to attend a meeting in the schoolroom, in the basement of the church, with the hope that the society would begin a new year of success. Dues of three dollars a year and donations in lieu of the regular dues or in addition to them were solicited.<sup>58</sup>

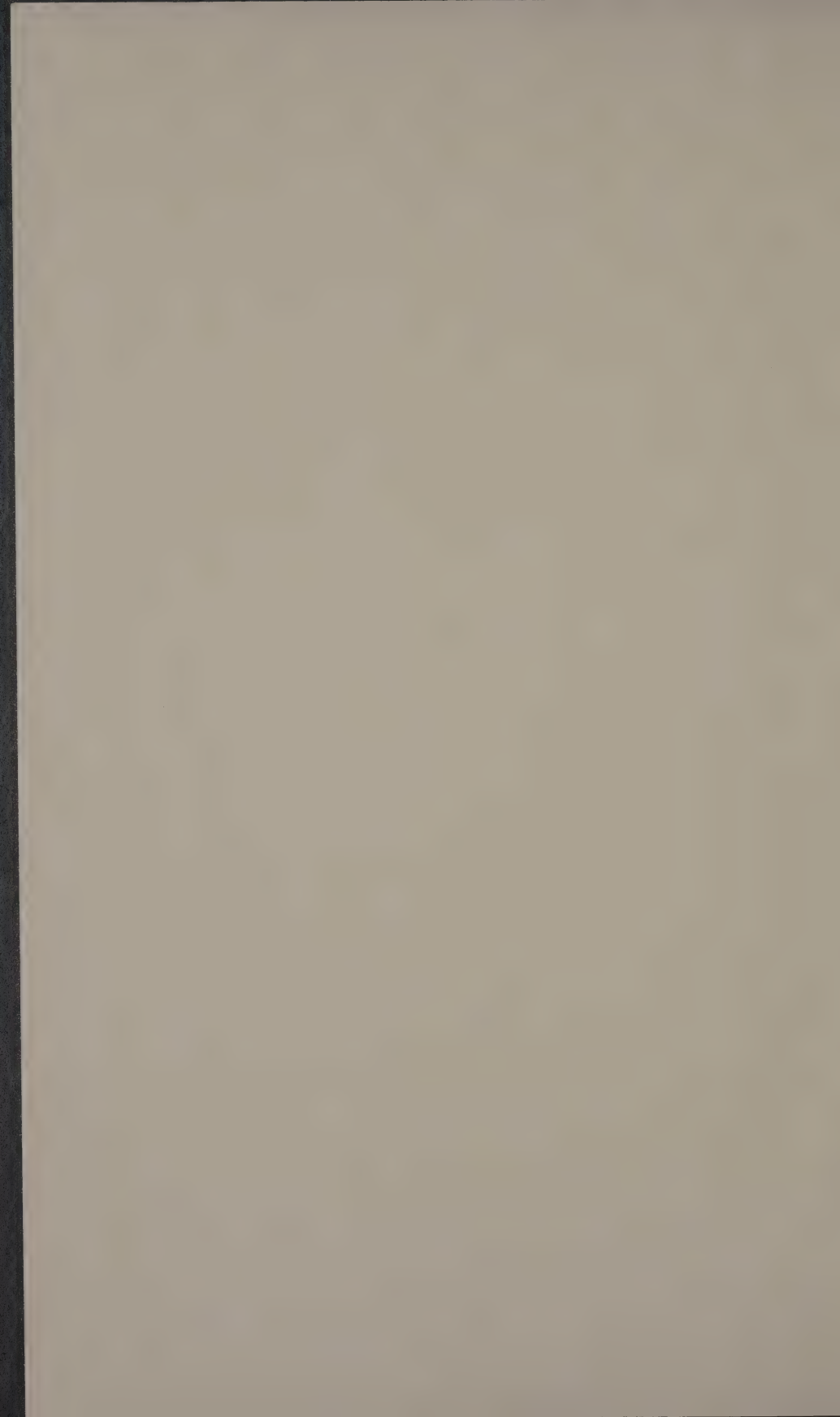
For many years, the French in New York depended on the occasional presence of a French priest. It was not until 1841 that the movement for the establishment of a French church was inaugurated. The Count de Forbin-Janson, Bishop of Nancy, visited America in 1840, giving missions in various parts of the United States and Canada. On February 28, 1841 he delivered a sermon in St. Peter's church. The following Wednesday he began a retreat. Convinced of the need of a church for Catholics of French extraction he appealed on Easter Sunday for contributions. Enthusiasm for the enterprise was at once demonstrated and the organization meetings of the "Catholic Association for the erection of the French Church, Canal Street," which became the Church of St. Vincent de Paul, were held at St. Peter's. The church, which was erected at a cost of \$38,000, was dedicated in 1842.<sup>59</sup> Although it was an auspicious occasion it temporarily meant a further division of St. Peter's congregation, with the task of debt liquidation of St. Peter's made all the more difficult. Since 1785, the French Catholics of New York had attended St. Peter's Church, and the successive pastors, including Dr. Power, spoke French fluently.

St. Peter's congregation has been known for its especial devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Episcopal permission for the daily Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, an unusual privilege for any church, was granted during the pastorate of Monsignor McGean. A recently discovered circular of 1842 is, on that account, an interesting document:





ST. PETER'S TODAY, 1837-1935



## Old St. Peter's, New York

### SOCIETY OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT, IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH

The Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament was formerly established in St. Peter's Church: it was suspended by circumstances over which the Clergy of this Church had no control. During its existence, it was found to be extremely useful, and exercised a most salutary influence on the habits and morals of those who were members of it. The time is now arrived when the Society can be resuscitated under the most favorable circumstances; and, in order to secure the utmost regularity, it has been thought proper to place it under the following rules:—

I. The Members of this Society will approach the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist once a month, if their avocations will permit.

II. On every Monday there will be a Mass offered for the repose of the departed friends and relatives of the Members.

III. Should any Member fall sick and require aid, the Director of the Society will attend to his wants; and, in case of death, will defray, from the funds of the Society, the necessary funeral expenses. Three Masses will also be offered for the departed Member.

IV. The monthly contribution of each Member will be *two shillings*, which must be punctually paid to the Director of the Society, the Rev. Father *Joseph de Andrade*, who is especially charged with the guardianship of the Society.

V. On the last Thursday of every month, at 8 o'clock A.M., there will be a Mass for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Members; immediately after which, a solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will be given.

VI. Persons of good character and regular habits, residents either of the city or country, can be Members of this Society.

JOHN POWER, V. G., &c.

CHARLES CONSTANTINE PISE, D. D.

JOSEPH ANDRADE, *Director of the Society.*

New York, December, 1842.<sup>60</sup>

Bishop Dubois, who since 1839 upon orders from Rome had yielded the administration of his diocese to his coadjutor, died in his seventy-eighth year in December, 1842, and was buried,

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at his own request, under the pavement immediately in front of the main entrance to Old St. Patrick's Cathedral.<sup>61</sup>

Father Andrade, one of the priests whose name was attached to the circular of the Society of the Blessed Sacrament mentioned above, was an assistant at St. Peter's from 1838 to 1848, when he was transferred to St. Stephen's,<sup>62</sup> and to the poor of which parish he left what little he had at his death (1856).

The Reverend Doctor Charles Constantine Pise, who became an assistant in 1839<sup>63</sup> left for Ireland on August 11, 1842 with the approval of Bishop Hughes, to collect money for St. Peter's Church. With letters of introduction to various bishops and priests in Ireland from Dr. Power and others, he visited a considerable part of the country.

Dr. Pise was born at Annapolis, November 22, 1801. Educated at Georgetown (1812-1815), he entered the Society of Jesus and three years later was a member of the college faculty. At the close of the scholastic year (1819-20), Father Anthony Kohlmann retired from the presidency of the college and went to Rome. It is not certain why Pise withdrew from the Society at this time, but he too went to Rome. He was called back by the death of his father, and continued his studies at the seminary at Emmitsburg (1821-2). While there he taught Latin classics. One of his pupils wrote in later years:

The Reverend Dr. Pise, professor of Rhetoric and poetry, was the handsomest man in the College, and was supposed to be the handsomest man in the United States. His hair was combed back in tresses, his countenance was delicately chiseled, his figure was perfect, and his step was elastic, every movement evinced grace. He had schooled himself to that degree that he did not appear to be conscious of it. He was too intelligent for that. His bearing was affable and cordial to everyone connected with the College, from the president down to the humblest individual that challenged the protection of the institution. He was learned and accomplished, and held the sincere affection of every person who met him even by occasional contact.<sup>64</sup>

The future Cardinal McCloskey credited his entrance into the priesthood to the conversations he had with Dr. Pise while he



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was at Mount St. Mary's. Dr. Pise was ordained in 1825 and two years later became assistant at the cathedral in Baltimore.

In 1827 after considerable historical labor, his *History of the Church from its Establishment to the Present Century* was published in five volumes. Although it was a scholarly work it was not financially successful.

A pioneer in Catholic literature in America, his first novel, *Father Rowland*, published in 1829, was a convincing defense of Catholic teaching against the calumnies of a previously published book, *Father Clement*. In fact, Dr. Pise's great work was in meeting with dignity and patience the vicious charges made against the Church during the Know Nothing period. In 1832 he collaborated with Father Varela in issuing the *Protestant Abridger and Expositor*, which was published as a counter-attack to the *Protestant*, of Brownlee fame.

He went to Rome in 1832 where he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity and was made a Knight of the Holy Roman Empire in recognition of his literary work in the United States. Pope Gregory XVI conferred upon him the Knighthood of the Sacred Palace and Count Palatine, the first time this honor was ever conferred on an American priest.

Returning to Washington, he was assigned as assistant at St. Patrick's Church and in the same year (1832) his name was suggested by Henry Clay for nomination as Chaplain of the Senate.

In that day of intense anti-Catholic feeling and bigotry when press and pulpit were alike at highest pitch of controversial interchange, such a move on Clay's part was a strange one. The thought of a Catholic priest holding such a position of honor in the Senate of the United States called forth strenuous efforts to prevent this "disaster" to the Republic.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, to the credit of the Senate, Pise received the office. Although he enjoyed the friendship of Clay and the President, he was the butt of attacks made by those who could not reconcile his Catholicism with his Americanism, in view of the recent Papal honors accorded him.

In 1834 he came to New York and was assigned as assistant

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pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Bishop Dubois having probably desired him as a professor for his college at Nyack. His life here was not pleasant, owing to the difficulties caused by the trustees and in 1837 he was succeeded by the future Cardinal, John McCloskey.

He remained attached to St. Joseph's, however, and engaged in his literary work until August 1839 when he was appointed assistant to Dr. Power at St. Peter's.

Here he was stationed for nine years during which time he successfully resurrected the *Expositor*, with Father Varela and himself as editors.

During these years the *Expositor* became a potent agent for the spread of Catholic literature. Its scholarly treatises and artistically compiled pages awakened ambition in the breast of many a dawning literary genius. It paved the way which since then has been so smoothly travelled, widened, and enriched; and if today we are justly proud of the progress which has been made in the field of Catholic literature in our country, some mead of recognition is due to one who pioneered the movement, who labored against the odds of opposition and lack of cooperation in the midst of hostile abuse and in the face of frequent discouragement from those even who should have recognized the nobility as well as the necessity of such a work.<sup>66</sup>

In the *Expositor* for 1842 and 1843 appeared "Horae Vagabundae," a series of lively and pleasing sketches descriptive generally of whom and what he saw in his travels through Ireland. His next publication in 1843, *Aletheia, or Letters on the Truth of Catholic Doctrine*, which was considered at the time as a triumph of typographical art, contained explanations of the doctrine of the Church presented in an attractive way.

In respect for his association with the Society of Jesus, and in admiration of the work of the Society and its founder, he wrote in 1845, *Saint Ignatius and His First Companions*, which he dedicated to his Alma Mater, Georgetown College. In the winter of the same year he delivered a series of brilliant controversial lectures in St. Peter's Church on the principle that such explanations, "fairly, calmly and decorously" addressed to

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his countrymen, might obviate the mischief being done by publications which were spreading and increasing prejudice against the Church and rendering her doctrines and her priesthood odious in public estimation. He contended that:

The American Catholic requires for himself what he loves to accede to his neighbor. He does not propitiate the boon of toleration; he demands the right of worshipping at whatever altar, and in whatever manner he may deem most acceptable to the God of all. He will never consent to behold that altar overthrown, or his religion destroyed, by fanaticism. All he desires is to see peace and good-will and charity extending their benign influence among all denominations and in every part of our great and glorious republic.<sup>67</sup>

These lectures were later published as *Lectures on the Invocation of the Saints, Veneration of Sacred Images, and Purgatory*, were dedicated to the Very Reverend Doctor Power, V.G., pastor of St. Peter's Church. In a preface to this work he held that:

The American people are of an inquiring and honorable character, and when they discover the solid arguments by which the Catholic tenets are proved and sustained, they will not fail to do them justice, and to make this acknowledgment at least, that we have every right and every reason to adhere with reverential affection to the Religion of all past ages.<sup>68</sup>

During the course of his trip in Ireland, in 1842, which may have been taken partly to avoid an embarrassing family matter here, he kept a notebook, which is now in the Pise Collection at Georgetown, and which contains the names of subscribers who kindly contributed to relieve the debt on St. Peter's Church. Among the names listed are Bishops John Murphy and B. Crotty (Cloyne) of Ireland, Mayor Thomas Lyons and Theobald Mathew, whose work as "Apostle of Temperance" in Ireland Dr. Pise so earnestly admired.<sup>69</sup> The trip resulted in little financial success and the difficulties confronting the trustees of St. Peter's continued.

On Sunday May 18, 1845 a grand sacred concert was held at St. Peter's for the benefit of the church. It was under the immediate direction of William A. King, organist of the church,



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who secured the cooperation of the New York Vocal Music Society, under the direction of H. C. Watson.<sup>70</sup>

By this time, the church was in hopeless financial embarrassment. When the trustees had commenced to build the new church in 1836 the then existing board was comparatively in easy circumstances, possessing the ground free of debt, the materials of the old edifice, ten thousand dollars in their treasury, and whatever donations had been realized from the voluntary contributions of the well-disposed. When the church was completed and a pastoral residence built on ground which was leased from the Corporation of Trinity Church,<sup>71</sup> the trustees (in 1837) had a debt of more than \$116,000.<sup>72</sup>

Soon after the erection of the church was commenced, the trustees, according to Archbishop Hughes,

induced the pastor of the church to proclaim from the pulpit, that the poor who had money, even in small sums, might with perfect safety give the use of it to the Board of Trustees—that they should allow the same interest that was allowed on deposits in the Savings Banks,—that it would be perfectly safe; and that, without loss to themselves, the depositors would be aiding the church and promoting religion. When these announcements were made I am quite persuaded that all parties acted in good faith, and had entire confidence in their future ability to return these sums, whenever they should be called for. Accordingly, an indefinite number of certificates, handsomely engraved, and fortified by the corporate seal of the Board, were given in due form to the depositors who came to offer their money. In this way they found their treasury replenished and overflowing.<sup>73</sup>

As time went on, the trustees struggled against a constantly mounting indebtedness. By 1844, it had increased from \$116,000 to \$135,000. Archbishop Hughes, in reviewing the events of 1837-1844 as an example of the evils inherent in the trustee system, said:

Their [the trustees] charter required that the Bishop of the diocese should be invited to attend their meetings, but no such invitation was ever sent to the present Archbishop. On the contrary, they regarded him as one having no confidence in their system,—in short, as one opposed to trustees. Neither shall I conceal a fact which it is no pleasure to me



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to have to record. And it is this, that finding themselves and their church sinking irretrievably, they waited on the Bishop a short time before the assignment, intimated to him their financial condition, but with a gilding of confidence in which he could not participate, desired he would authorize them to increase their mortgage to a sum of \$40,000 instead of \$19,000, out of which they should pay off the old mortgage, and from the balance discharge certain other pressing debts. They acknowledge at the same time that the trustee system was by no means the best, and proposed with the greatest simplicity to transfer the whole property to the Bishop, which he respectfully but absolutely declined. The Bishop also admonished them, that as honest men they could not allow the claims of a new and enlarged mortgage on their property to come in against the rights of the note-holders. That the church, according to their own acknowledgment, was bankrupt, and consequently belonged in right and in justice equally pro-rata to all their creditors. They seemed to acquiesce in this just view of the case. But it came to the knowledge of the Bishop within a few days afterwards, that they were actually negotiating for a loan of \$40,000 at an insurance office in Wall street. The Bishop then wrote a note, addressed to their Board, warning them against proceeding in the matter of that loan, and stating that if they did proceed he should publish a copy of that note, both for his own vindication, and to their discredit. They proceeded notwithstanding. They paid off their old mortgage, and applied the balance of the new one to the payment of such debts as they thought proper to discharge before making their assignment. When reproached afterwards for having disregarded the advice of the Bishop, it was alleged that his communication had been mislaid among their papers, and had escaped notice until the whole transaction was completed.<sup>74</sup>

In 1844 the Board of Trustees became virtually bankrupt and an assignment of the church for the benefit of creditors was made on September 14, 1844, by which they bequeathed to any purchaser the ecclesiastical property of St. Peter's Church. The claims against them amounted to \$134,945, and to the dismay of the Catholic body of New York the church which was the mother parish of the State of New York was placed on auction at the Merchant's Exchange, where it was sold according to law for \$46,000.

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Archbishop Hughes, unable to remedy the situation, had the property purchased for him, and was soon confronted with legal suits, which previous to the assignment had been instituted by note-holders to recover their claims. These persons disputed the validity of the sale, and the whole question was thrown into the courts of law, and remained undecided until November 1, 1849.

During this period, the assignees were Doctors Power and Pise, legally designated as such by the Court. They, together with those employed by them, were for the time being, not only administrators, but proprietors of the Church of St. Peter. At the commencement of their administration, according to Archbishop Hughes, he was assured that, inasmuch as the law, while the case was in chancery, would not allow any interest to be paid except on the bond and mortgage, there would be an accumulation from the income of the church of \$3000 to \$4000.<sup>75</sup> Instead of this, during the period of assignment no surplus income was accounted for. Even the annual interest on the bond and mortgage was not fully paid, the arrearage of interest on the debt having been more than \$5000.

In discussing this period of the legal administration (1844-1849) of St. Peter's Church, Archbishop Hughes continued:

During a great portion of the time, but especially during the period of the assignment, nothing was left undone to bring disgrace and infamy on the Catholic name in New York. The assignees were the pastors of the church. The senior pastor was through ill health, for the most part, confined to his room, and unable to attend with proper diligence to the duties which the law had imposed on him. The junior assignee took but little interest in the subject, partly because he was the junior, and partly because his natural force of character, especially when a stern duty was to be performed, would range somewhere between the positive and the negative of whatever question would come up. The consequence was, that, under legal advice, a third party was introduced, and constituted a plenipotentiary in the administration of the affairs of St. Peter's. He was supposed at the time to be a Catholic. When he entered on the duties of his office his pecuniary condition was but a few degrees above that of a pauper. He was said to be a good bookkeeper, and the

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writer would not endorse that sentiment, whilst he is willing to acknowledge that he kept his books well—although even in this respect there are items on his books which appear to have never been accounted for. This man was treasurer, secretary, trustee—in fact, every thing in St. Peter's Church. He employed subordinates at his will, dismissed them when he chose; received all moneys for pew-rents; counted Sunday collections; made his entries of income and expenditure just as he thought proper. After some time, the Archbishop learned with regret that the promised accumulation of surplus income was not to be expected. He urged that every practicable economy should be resorted to; inquired into the items of expenditure which might be reduced, and found as the only result, that this administrator of the law had but one item of economy, which was indignantly spurned by the Archbishop; and this was, a suggestion to withhold from the senior pastor the sum allowed to him, but which his broken health did not permit him to earn by actual labor. This may show the delicate scrupulosity of an agent of the law in administering the temporal affairs of a Catholic church. In the mean time, the unfortunate note-holders, whose money had been received by the trustees of St. Peter's, rendered the Bishop's life a daily martyrdom by their wailings and lamentations at the loss of the little earnings which their industry had accumulated, and which now, that age and poverty, and ill-health had overtaken them, were no longer within their reach. He could not come to their aid, but he could not, on the other hand, drive them from his door harshly. He was doomed to listen to their tales of distress. If he told them that they must address themselves to the assignees, their answer was that they had applied; that the assignees referred them to the agent of the law, who received all the moneys of St. Peter's Church;—that when they applied to him he swore at them, and threatened to kick them out of his office.

This species of daily torture continued during the whole period of the assignment. And as time went on, one could read in such newspapers as were liable to be imposed upon, a series of scurrilous articles against the Archbishop, and against St. Patrick's Cathedral, for not coming to the relief of the poor note-holders of St. Peter's. Whence those articles proceeded was by no means a secret. The last edition of them has appeared in the *New York Express*. And if any editor thinks that he can annoy Archbishop Hughes with a



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republication of the scurrilities which emanated from under the assignment of St. Peter's Church, he will easily find the man to furnish them.<sup>76</sup>

During the whole period of the legal administration of the church, Dr. Power suffered heroically with an illness of long standing. He died on April 14, 1849 at the age of fifty-seven, having completed thirty years of faithful and fruitful service in the church which in his last days had met disaster. There is no doubt that his bodily suffering was augmented by the mental anguish of the distress that had befallen his beloved parish. Fully 2500 people visited the church to view him who had been so long connected with its history. His body was brought to St. Patrick's Cathedral where Archbishop Hughes preached on his long service at St. Peter's. The charity of his life was exemplified by his lack of possession of any wealth when he left it.<sup>77</sup> A contemporary of his wrote:

He was a man of great learning, piety and talent: as a scholar he was pre-eminent, being intimately acquainted with the Greek, Latin, French, Spanish and Italian languages, as a zealous defender of the Faith, as a writer he had few equals and no superior. Great benevolence and sweetness of disposition won for him the affection of all.<sup>78</sup>

During the course of his career, he had published some works of devotion, a translation of part of the *Royaumont Bible*, and a catechetical *History of the New Testament*.<sup>79</sup>

Dr. Power was succeeded as pastor by his assistant, Dr. Pise. The latter remained in charge of the parish until November 1, 1849 when he went to establish the new Church of St. Charles Borromeo, Sidney Place, Brooklyn.

Dr. Pise, whom Archbishop Corrigan said, was "one of the gentlest and meekest of men; never retorting by a harsh word"<sup>80</sup> had an unfortunate difference of opinion with Archbishop Hughes. In consequence he tendered his resignation as a priest of the diocese, which the Archbishop refused to accept. There being no alternative, he returned to his post in Sidney Place, which in 1853 came under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the newly created See of Brooklyn, the Right Reverend John Lough-



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lin, where Dr. Pise continued his literary career and his pastoral duties. He died in 1866.

In the publication of *Brooksiana*, the Archbishop had made several remarks regarding the part played by Dr. Pise in the administration of the property of St. Peter's Church, which were construed by the latter as illaudable. After the death of the Archbishop, he felt compelled to write a defense of his actions, which has never been published, and which in justice to Dr. Pise is worthy of consideration in full:

In his introduction to *Brooksiana*, the late Archbishop of N. York dwells, at some length, upon the assignment of St. Peter's Church, and alludes, in severe terms, to myself, whom he styles in his sardonic language, the "Junior Assignee." On several other occasions he has gone out of his way to make free with my name (always, however, *Inlauditus*) in a manner calculated to make no favourable impression upon the public mind.

As long as I was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Archbishop, I refrained from remarking upon his course in my regard: but after my position changed, and I held no relation toward him than that of one gentleman towards another, I felt myself not only at liberty, but bound by self respect, to make my explanation of the whole affair, which, however, I withhold from the public until the present time, when the Archbishop no longer lives, but his *Brooksiana* survives.

When appointed Assistant Pastor of St. Peter's by the Venerable Bishop Dubois, I found myself associated with the Very Rev. Dr. Power, a very old friend, whom the whole community respected as a Priest and loved as a man. When The Trustees of that church were about making the assignment, Dr. Power requested me to serve with him in the capacity of Assignee: and under the convictions that my office would continue only for a few months, and that my name would add confidence, in the minds of the Creditors, I consented to assume the charge. In effect, at the expiration of a short time, the validity of the Assignment was confirmed by the Court: and had not the Creditors themselves appealed from its decision, there would have been an end of the trouble. But, unfortunately, they did appeal, and the case was thrown into Chancery where it remained for several years.

The Rev. Dr. Power wishing to be guided safely, through

the intricacies of a protracted assignment, secured the legal services of an eminent Lawyer, by whose advice a Bookkeeper was appointed by him. I say by him, because although I agreed to the propriety of engaging such an officer, yet from motives of delicacy the Archbishop understood, I objected to the individual designated: who, however, proved himself to be fully competent to the task.

As long as Dr. Power lived, my confidence in his ability and prudence was such that I deemed it unnecessary to trouble myself about the details of the affair. Still, aware of my responsibility, I did not neglect, at certain periods of time, to ascertain from our legal guide, that things were all right. His assurances given sometimes in writing, were perfectly satisfactory. Not only did he work for the superior manner in which the accounts were kept, but congratulated us on having so able and so faithful a Clerk.

While Dr. Power was carefully managing the process of the assignment, and while our Lawyer in whom I placed unbounded confidence, satisfied me that I might rest at ease as far as my responsibility was at stake, I certainly, cannot be blamed (especially as things all turned out right in the end) for not examining daily and minutely into all the details, engaged as I was, during the whole time, in the duties of the Ministry. I cannot plead guilty of apathy, however, as the Archbishop insinuates. I cannot consent to let the world imagine I "felt in it little or no interest." I was alive, deeply alive, to the weight of my responsibility, legal, moral, and ecclesiastical, but, as long as the validity of the assignment was in litigation, my hands were tied: and I could do nothing more than lament the sad condition into which the Creditors were thrown by the Trustees, and evince my sympathy and condolence for their wrongs, of which I am as innocent as the Archbishop himself, as he well knew.

Neither do I understand what "stern duty" he alludes to, in which my "force of character" wavered and oscillated. No such crisis ever presented itself.

My duty was to await the decision of Chancery, and, after that, if favourable to the assignment, to abide the consequences.

To save the Church and satisfy the Creditors was the aim of Dr. Power as well as myself. And this we could have done, having in reserve thirty lots on the Fifth Avenue, the sale of which, afterwards, rescued, in reality, St. Peter's Church. In the mean time, My Venerable Associate, the Senior

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Assignee," was called away by Providence from his sufferings and sorrows. His bodily pains, accute and protracted as they were, were less wasting than his mental anguish: and all the Catholics, nay the whole Community, of N. York, creditors included, united in an unanimous expression of mourning and regret at the loss of that great and good man. "*Multis ille bonis plebilio occidid*" [?]

After his demise finding myself alone under the burden which it was my original intention merely to aid him in supporting, I made up my mind to resign my charge, inexperienced, as I knew myself to be in the financial and legal intricacies involved in the position I held. My training, from early youth, had been in the Sanctuary. In the study of Theology and the pursuit of letters, I had been taught to seek for distinction, and not by any extraneous ability in the transaction of temporal affairs. And, accordingly, having prayed the Court—on these grounds—to release me from the trust, my petition was granted, and my successor was appointed. The field was now clear. The assignment had been confirmed beyond the possibility of appeal. Nothing now remained but to go to work, redeem the Church, and pay the Creditors. To accomplish this extraordinary efforts were made, but backed, it must be remembered, and urged forward, by the Archbishop, who, during the whole time of the disputed assignment, did not move in the least in the matter, but left the Assignees to act for themselves, only asking a few questions, occasionally, as to the condition and progress of affairs. It was only after the death of Dr. Power, that he took the business in hand, and stirred up the energies of the people to arise to the rescue of the Church. But those energies generous as they were, would not have sufficed, had not the lots, above alluded to, been sold.

The Archbishop states that a proposition was made to him to deprive Dr. Power of his salary, which he "indignantly rejected." By whom such a proposition was made I am at a loss to surmise. I rather opine that he misunderstood the tenor of a conversation which occurred between us on this subject. In speaking, on a certain occasion, of my responsibility as Assignee, he remarked, with a very significant emphasis, that "the day of reckoning would come, and that I must be prepared to meet it." The time and manner in which this was said, made so deep an impression on my mind, that, I immediately, called on our Lawyer, and begged him to inform me, if in view of the "day of reckoning," there was



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anything that could be set down as illegal, and for which I might, personally, be responsible. I urged him to give me a candid answer as I wished to satisfy the Archbishop who had warned me in so portentous a tone. He replied, that, as a conscientious opinion was asked, he would state, that the only items for which I might be made personally responsible in the rigors of the law, though he felt assured that such rigors would not be enforced (yet it *might* be) were: the salary paid to the Sisters of Charity in Barclay Street, and that of the Rev. Dr. Power, whose infirmities prevented him from rendering any active service in the Ministry.

I seized the first opportunity to report the substance of this conversation with the Lawyer to the Archbishop, induced by a scrupulous determination to make known to him the opinion given, not dreaming that it involved the most remote idea, on my part, of cutting off from the good and honored Rector his long-earned salary. If any other proposition was made to the Archbishop, far from being a party to it, I remain, to this day, ignorant of the source from which it emanated.

The Archbishop, moreover, alludes to certain "scurillities" published against him in a manner to insinuate that I might have been implicated in them. It cannot be that he himself could have entertained any such suspicion against one whom he had known from early youth, and who would have disdained, not only from the instincts of his nature, but more especially from respect due to the Episcopal dignity to be a party to such unseemly work. Nevertheless, as others, to whom I am not personally known, may be led to suspect that I was concerned in it, I take this opportunity to declare, that in no manner of way, directly or indirectly, did I ever write, dictate, or sanction a single word devastating to the name or administration of the Archbishop in any paper, or through any medium whatever.<sup>81</sup>



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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan, "Register of the Clergy Laboring in the Archdiocese of New York from Early Missionary Times to 1885," *Records and Studies*, II, 42.

<sup>2</sup>Reprinted in the *Truth Teller*, November 24, 1832, VIII, no. 48, 382.

<sup>3</sup>The *Truth Teller*, April 19, 1834, X, 127.

<sup>4</sup>"Diurnal of Bishop England," *Records*, VI, 188.

<sup>5</sup>Power to Bishop Plessis, November 9, 1821, *Records*, XXV, 236.

<sup>6</sup>Georgetown Archives, 31.8; *Researches* LXVIII, 229.

<sup>7</sup>He died, however, in 1826.

<sup>8</sup>Fenwick to Father Badin, December 5, 1824, *Researches*, XXII.

<sup>9</sup>Peter Guilday, *Life and Times of John England, First Bishop of Charleston, 1786-1842*, New York, America Press I, 434.

<sup>10</sup>His Formula of Dismissal, signed by Aloysius Fortis, was dated October 9, 1824. Hughes, *op. cit.*, (Documents) I, Part 1, 527.

<sup>11</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 188 f.

<sup>12</sup>Guilday, *John England*, I, 435.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 446.

<sup>14</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 74.

<sup>15</sup>*Pastoral Letter to the Clergy and Laity*, cited in Guilday, *John England*, I, 449.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup>Power to Bishop Conwell, January 30, 1829; *Ibid.*, 447.

<sup>18</sup>The *Truth Teller*, II, 357, 367; November 11, 18, 1826.

<sup>19</sup>*Records*, XV, 484.

<sup>20</sup>Cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>21</sup>Shea, III, 201.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 205.

<sup>23</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 110.

<sup>24</sup>July 3, 1827.

<sup>25</sup>August 7, 1827.

<sup>26</sup>*Op. cit.*, I, 78.

<sup>27</sup>His first register in St. Peter's is January 10, 1828. The trustees voted him a salary to begin on January 1 of the same year. His last entry in the Baptismal Record is October 13, 1831.

<sup>28</sup>Letter of G. W. Pierson, of Yale University, to Thomas F. Meehan, *Records and Studies*, XX, 187.

<sup>29</sup>I am indebted to the translator of these documents, Mr. G. W. Pierson, for the privilege of publishing them. They are in the possession of the De Tocqueville family, Tocqueville, Normandy, copies of which are in the collection of the Paul White Memorial Fund, Yale University.

<sup>30</sup>Letter to the Association of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyons, March 16, 1830, *Records and Studies*, V, 218.

<sup>31</sup>See a critical revision of this estimate in Gerald Shaughnessy's, *Has the Immigrant Kept the Faith? A study of Immigration and Catholic Growth in the United States, 1790-1925*, New York, Macmillan, 1925, 115 f.

<sup>32</sup>Guilday, *John England*, II, 215.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>34</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 499.

<sup>35</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 132.

<sup>36</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 502.

<sup>37</sup>Guilday, *John England*, II, 221.

<sup>38</sup>DeCourcy-Shea, *op. cit.*, 394.

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<sup>30</sup>VIII, no. 38, pp. 303, 317, 365, 465.

<sup>40</sup>1833, IX, 29.

<sup>41</sup>IX, 38, 45.

<sup>42</sup>IX, in successive numbers starting with p. 45 and ending on p. 405.

<sup>43</sup>McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 115.

<sup>44</sup>Bishop Dubois on New York in 1836. "From an appeal for aid to the Archbishop of Vienna." *Records and Studies*, X, 125.

<sup>45</sup>Shea, *The Catholic Churches of New York City*, 607.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, 607.

<sup>47</sup>Fortunately, no one was present in the edifice at the time.

<sup>48</sup>April 23, 1836. XII, no. 17, 134.

<sup>49</sup>McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 124.

<sup>50</sup>In grading the floor of the new basement chapel (1932) remains were unearthed of some who were buried in the old churchyard. Father Noonan had them reinterred in a vault in the center aisle of the church and the spot marked by an appropriate tablet.

In January 1829 lots which now form the new cathedral site on Fiftieth Street were secured by the trustees of St. Peter's and St. Patrick's for a burial ground at a price of \$5500. The purchase occasioned much criticism not on account of the nature of the land—almost solid rock—but because it was so far beyond city limits and difficult to get to. Finally in 1832, a plot situated between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets between Avenue A and First Avenue was secured and this served as a burial place until Calvary cemetery was opened in 1848.—Thomas F. Meehan, (*Records and Studies*, IV, 295).

<sup>51</sup>March 10, 1834. *Records*, VIII, 467.

<sup>52</sup>May 24, 1834, X, 166.

<sup>53</sup>Guilday, *John England*, II, 345 f.

<sup>54</sup>Address of Thomas O'Connor, trustee, July 19, 1840; cited in Shea, *Catholic Churches of New York City*, 609 f.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 610.

<sup>56</sup>Address of Thomas O'Connor, July 19, 1840, cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 131.

<sup>57</sup>He spent three of the months during the summer of 1838 in charge of St. John's Church, Salina, where he went evidently to recuperate his health. Letter of Reverend S. Guerdet, March 7, 1849, to Archbishop Bayley; cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 127.

<sup>58</sup>Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 47.

<sup>59</sup>Shea, *Catholic Churches of New York City*, 704.

<sup>60</sup>Pierre Toussaint Collection, Manuscript Room, New York Public Library.

<sup>61</sup>Bayley, *op. cit.*, 132.

<sup>62</sup>His entries in the Baptismal Register begin June 25, 1838. He is spoken of as a Franciscan friar in the Catholic Directory of 1858.

<sup>63</sup>His first entry in the Marriage Records is August 1, 1839.

<sup>64</sup>Sister M. Eulalia T. Moffatt, "Charles Constantine Pise (1801-1866)," *Records and Studies*, XX, 71.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, 86 f.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>69</sup>Georgetown Archives, 143.4.

<sup>70</sup>Pierre Toussaint Collection, Manuscript Room, New York Public Library.

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<sup>71</sup>At what is now No. 32 Barclay Street. The ground of the present rectory is still owned by Trinity Church Corporation.

<sup>72</sup>*Brooksianna, or the Controversy Between Senator Brooks and Archbishop Hughes, Growing out of the Recently Enacted Church Property Bill*, New York, Strong, 1870, 16.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 f.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, 20 ff.

<sup>77</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, IV, 118.

<sup>78</sup>McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 149.

<sup>79</sup>*Records and Studies*, II, 42.

<sup>80</sup>*Records and Studies*, II, 69.

<sup>81</sup>"The Junior Assignee of St. Peter's and Brooksiana," The Pise Collection, Georgetown Archives, Vol. 143-4.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE END OF TRUSTEEISM: THE PASTORATE OF THE VERY REVEREND WILLIAM QUINN, V.G., (1849-1873)

The successor to Dr. Pise as pastor of St. Peter's was the Reverend William Quinn (1820-1887). Born in the parish of Donoughmore, County Donegal, Ireland, he received his early training in the schools of the Diocese of Derry. After coming to this country in 1841, he entered St. John's College, Fordham, which in June of that year was formally opened under the presidency of Father John McCloskey, later the first American Cardinal, who had been baptised by Father Fenwick in Old St. Peter's on May 6, 1810. The position of president and professor was too severe upon the health of Father McCloskey, and when he resigned in 1842 to return as pastor of St. Joseph's Church, William Quinn was one of the seventeen seminarians of St. John's College, which was then a preparatory institution to St. Joseph's Seminary, Fordham, who expressed to him their tribute of gratitude and affection.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Father McCloskey had become coadjutor to Bishop Hughes in 1844 and on December 17 of that year, he raised William Quinn, his former pupil, to the dignity of the priesthood. Father Quinn's first appointment was to St. Joseph's Church, as assistant to Father McCarron, where he remained until September 1849. He then spent two months at Rondout, as pastor until he was placed by Bishop Hughes in St. Peter's where he served for an unbroken period of twenty-four years.

Father Quinn began his pastorate at St. Peter's under the most embarrassing financial situation. The legal administration of the church during the five years immediately prior to his appointment, increased the already huge debt under which the parish was buried.

Referring to the conduct of the lay administrator appointed to supervise the management of finances, Bishop Hughes, whose diocese in 1850 became a Metropolitan see, said:



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We have seen that the legal administrator was a plenipotentiary in all respects. He allowed arrears to accumulate on the interest of bond and mortgage. He allowed arrearages to accumulate on the ground-rent of the pastoral residence. Death had removed the senior pastor. Other clergymen were sent to aid in discharging the spiritual duties of the sacred ministry. They were men who feared God, and did not fear powers of attorney. Their presence became disagreeable to our plenipotentiary; and, in order to scatter the priests from his neighborhood, he made known that the corporation of Trinity Church, inasmuch as their ground-rent had not been paid, wished to reenter and take possession of their property: He placed a bill accordingly on their house, "TO LET." Some of the priests were already frightened away—others had their books packed up—but in the meantime, and by the merest accident, it came to the knowledge of the Archbishop that the corporation of Trinity Church had no wish to drive out the priests of St. Peter's on account of arrearage, but that they acceded to the proposition, under the advice of the legal plenipotentiary, who had stated to them that the interests of the church required a larger revenue, and that the only means to effect it were to dispossess the priests of their abode and rent the house. Under these circumstances the Archbishop sent word that he would become their tenant, and see that the arrearage should be duly paid. At this stage of the proceedings, patience and endurance had become exhausted. The Archbishop directed that a meeting should be called of the congregation on the following Sunday evening. This broke somewhat unexpectedly on the ears of our plenipotentiary. But he was conscious of the powers which the law gave him within the sacred precincts of St. Peter's Church, and he remarked in the most calm and philosophical way imaginable to one of the congregation—"The Bishop is coming here this evening: I hope he will behave well. If he does, we shall treat him with respect, but if he does not, I shall say to him, 'Bishop, there's the door for you.'"

This meeting took place, however, and the Bishop behaved well. But he brought this man up, and placed his conduct and administration before his eyes in such a light that without being told to quit his office, he sought the door and relinquished it—that is, ceased to render any further services, but claimed and obtained his salary according to law for the unexpired portion of his engagement.<sup>2</sup>

By gaining possession of the administration of the church and

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putting an end to the mismanagement of the lay assignee, the position of Father Quinn was eased. Furthermore, the court had confirmed the legality of the sale of St. Peter's under the assignment and according to the law, the congregation was relieved of paying anything but the \$46,000 for which the church was sold under that assignment. The total amount of indebtedness, however, not including the original \$10,000 which the trustees had at the commencement of building of the new church, was almost \$140,000. To the everlasting credit of the congregation of St. Peter that obligation was not considered satisfied. Accordingly, under the patronage of the Archbishop and the leadership of Father Quinn, measures were adopted to liquidate this debt of honor and the court appointed the Reverend James R. Bayley, who at that time was secretary to Archbishop Hughes, and James B. Nicholson as assignees to disentangle the affairs of the church.

Appeals were made to the more wealthy of the congregation and among other means, a society was formed under the direction of Father Quinn, who in three years was able to reduce the debt by almost \$20,000, and of this amount, more than \$9000 was paid to those note holders whose circumstances were more pressing. In addition, almost \$3000 were spent during that period for improvements and extra expenses, making in all almost \$23,000 which had been accumulated over current expenses.<sup>3</sup> A circumstance that eased the financial weight upon the parish was the fact that the lots in Fiftieth Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues, which the trustees had purchased conjointly with those of St. Patrick's, were disposed of at a price which represented an increase in value of one fourth of their purchase price.

The success of Father Quinn in clearing off the debt on the church led to the holding of a special *Te Deum* service on the last Sunday of 1852. In reporting the event, the *Freeman's Journal* of January 1, 1853 said:

The style of architecture of St. Peter's does not admit of the carvings we have seen on the outer faces of the walls of some old Gothic Churches in Europe, where figures were chiselled representing the spirits of evil driven forth, with hideous grimaces, from within the Temple; but their places might on this building be supplied by cutting on the granite

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tablets of its portico, in truthful figures of arithmetic, the history of its Boards of Trustees, and uncanonical manoeuvres. While, within the Church, we think it might be a pious and edifying counterpart to engrave on a tablet of pure white—

“A LONG DESOLATION,  
AND A SHAME GROWN OLD,  
THREE YEARS OF CANONICAL OBEDIENCE AND  
CATHOLIC DEVOTION HAVE SUFFICED TO REPAIR.  
A. D., 1852.”

The Church was very tastefully decorated, and the Altar was magnificently dressed, for this joyful occasion. The Church was densely crowded by an audience as intelligent and respectable as could well be assembled in any one place. At the close of the Archbishop's address the Congregation, who entered deeply into the jubilant spirit of the evening, rose, while the Choir, which always performs good music at St. Peter's, chanted the *Te Deum Laudamus*, as arranged by Romberg.<sup>4</sup>

On that occasion Archbishop Hughes not only paid tribute but drew a lesson:

I congratulate your pastor, who, by his prudence and his devotion and unceasing energy, has been your representative, encouraging you, and accomplishing the wonderful things which he has accomplished, when you find that within three years, besides the ordinary expenses of this church, he has paid, or you have enabled him to pay, twenty-two thousand dollars to the poor note-holders. I congratulate St. Peter's Church that they have borne their own burthens, and called for no aid from other quarters. I congratulate and return my thanks to those gentlemen who first met me at the residence of the clergy, on the very night on which that downward system was broken up, when they, . . . contributed . . . towards the redemption of this temple, and towards wiping away the stain which its circumstances were calculated to leave upon the Catholic Church. Nor can I avoid returning thanks to the present assignees, the Rev. Mr. Bayley and Mr. James B. Nicholson, for I am well aware of the labors, the assiduity, the patience, the loss of time, and the trouble which these gentlemen have taken at all times to execute in the most perfect manner the trusts committed to their charge. And now, dearly beloved brethren, is this dear-bought experience



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to be lost upon the Catholic body? Is this fact, extending over more than fifteen years, and perplexing the efforts of the Catholic body in this entire city, bearing down their credit, and sending abroad the watchword of distrust against those dealing with the church—is all this to pass away, without impressing upon our minds some useful lesson? I trust not. I trust it will be a lesson to this congregation and this city, and to the Catholic Church throughout the entire United States. It is an experience, and an experience going to show that wherever, in the management even of their temporal affairs, the Catholic people have deserted the rules laid down in their Church, that God has not manifested His blessing in their operations. It will be a lesson which ought not to be lost on trustees, or bishops, or priests, or laymen, viz: that they have no right to turn into bankers, even though the poor should have full confidence in making them the depositories of money. . . . It is a dangerous system, and certainly as long as Almighty God permits me to be at the head of this diocese, no priest of mine, or Catholic laymen, shall ever have authority, in the name of religion, to receive one penny in the form of deposit. This is the lesson with the experience we have had should teach us, and another lesson is one of benefit, as well as warning, and it is this: It is now very difficult for Catholics, as such, to borrow money, for our reputation has been injured; and so far as we are a religious body, I rejoice that it is so, and I trust that the difficulty of borrowing money, except in cases of absolute necessity, will be so increased, that we shall learn to find within ourselves all the resources for the healthy continuation and extension of our Church.<sup>5</sup>

The era of trustee control of St. Peter's came officially to an end on August 20, 1850 when a deed to the property of the church was transferred to the Right Reverend John Hughes. In September 1844, the Board of Trustees, finding themselves in straitened circumstances, had been authorized by the court "to grant, assign and convey . . . to John Power and Charles Constantine Pise, all the real and personal estate, etc. of said Corporation." They were empowered "to sell and convert into money either at public auction or private sale . . . the property and effects" of the church to be applied to the payment of the debts of the Corporation (except mortgages).<sup>6</sup>

The church, as has been seen, was put up at auction and it was



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bought in by Gregory Dillon, associated with other prominent Catholics among whom were Felix Ingoldsby, Martin Waters, James Kerrigan, Charles M. Connolly, Bernard Graham and John Benson. When the Court of Appeals sustained the validity of the sale under assignment, a deed was made over to Gregory Dillon by Dr. Pise on June 7, 1850, Dr. Power having died during the legal proceedings. Then on August 20, 1850 a deed was executed by Gregory Dillon transferring St. Peter's to the Right Reverend John Hughes.

This conveyance and similar ones throughout the diocese which sounded the death-knell of the trustee system were the occasion of an attempt by the Legislature of the State to divest Catholic church property from its rightful owners.

In 1852, a bill was proposed to the New York State Legislature on behalf of the congregation of St. Peter's Church, with the approval of Archbishop Hughes, which proposed to enable Catholic Bishops in the State to hold in their official capacity, church property in trust for religious or charitable uses.<sup>7</sup> This bill, making the Bishops corporations sole, would have eliminated the need of lay trustees as well as the danger of church property held in the name of Bishops passing to heirs at law.

But the rebel trustees in Rochester and Buffalo immediately protested and sent counter petitions to the Legislature. That of Rochester was a sinister effort to gain the support of elements hostile to the Church. It denounced the proposed measure "as being contrary to our liberal and free institutions, and being likely to deprive our Catholic fellow-citizens of that right to incorporate themselves into religious societies by granting such power to their higher clergy."<sup>8</sup>

Archbishop Hughes felt that the law would have been of great benefit and that far from conferring a dangerous amount of power upon Bishops, it would actually diminish and regulate "a power which the Catholic Bishops have already to an extent which is more than agreeable to themselves." He said:

The Bishops of New York, Albany, and Buffalo are now legally the owners in *fee-simple* of nearly all the religious and charitable property existing within their respective ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The Catholics, for whose benefit this prop-

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erty is held, have no apprehensions as regards its security; but the bishops themselves feel it as an oppression to the owners, in *fee-simple* of such an amount of property; and it would be an additional security to the people, as well as a relief to the prelates, or others circumstanced as they are, if some general law were passed, by which it might be transmitted in trust to their successors, without the necessity of providing against contingencies which result from the uncertainties of life and of last will and testaments. If some person should imagine that this could be accomplished by local trustees, to be elected from time to time, as is usually the case among Protestant denominations, our answer is, that if we are entitled to religious equality before the law, we should be allowed to hold and manage our religious and charitable property in conformity with our own ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>9</sup>

No action was taken by the Legislature on the bill and in 1853 the matter was again taken up. Members of the Legislature desired to know what was the real Catholic opinion on the matter and received petitions from every quarter begging the Legislature "to leave the matter in the hands to which Catholic sentiment and Catholic prudence had committed it."<sup>10</sup> Although the committee of the Legislature was satisfied as to where Catholic opinion lay in the matter, the proposed act was not passed.

In 1855, the Know Nothings were especially strong in New York and although they did not command a majority of the Legislature, they were very aggressive. The National Council of the Know Nothing party in that year laid down as one of their fundamental purposes, resistance to the "aggressive policy and the corrupting tendencies of the Roman Catholic Church."<sup>11</sup>

The rebellious trustees of the Buffalo church turned to members of this party in the Legislature to pass an act which would make it impossible for a Bishop to hold church property so as to be able to transmit it to his successor in office.

The enactment was given the appearance of a general law, whereas Archbishop Hughes stigmatized it as "a penal enactment, requiring Roman Catholics of the State of New York to be governed, in the enjoyment and use of their own property set apart for ecclesiastical purposes, not by the discipline of the religion

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which they profess, but by the statute of the Legislature.”<sup>12</sup> Shea called it “the first enactment denying individual property in land, and asserting the right of the State not only to confiscate all land without compensation but even to convey it at will.”<sup>13</sup>

It declared void any grant, conveyance, devise or lease of personal property or real estate made for the benefit of any person or his successor in any ecclesiastical office. This phrase, general though it was, applied specifically to Catholic bishops and Section II provided that upon their death, any ecclesiastical property held in their names must revert to the religious congregations occupying the same; that if the congregation was not incorporated the property would legally pass to the ownership of the State, “as if the person holding the legal title thereto had died intestate and without heirs capable of inheriting such real estate.”<sup>14</sup> It further authorized the State to dispose of such acquired property to the congregation using it prior to the death of such ecclesiastical personage. Shea said that:

This Act confiscated the property of five bankrupt boards of trustees, sold under judicial or other legal process and purchased by Archbishop Hughes with his own money, annexed it to the State domain, and conveyed it back to the bankrupts without consideration. The incorporation required by the State was one in which boards of trustees were elected by pew and seat renters, not required to be Catholics, attendants at the church, or participants in its Sacraments, a system which had been modified to suit several Protestant denominations.

The Act was not framed to benefit Catholics or their Church, but was drawn up and passed by their avowed and bitter enemies to introduce confusion and ruin into their temporal affairs.<sup>15</sup>

Among the advocates of the measure in the Senate were James O. Putnam and Erastus Brooks. An idea of the spirit in which Senator Brooks defended the petitioners for the law may be gleaned from the following:

In the remarks I propose to make, I shall aim to show that the political State is Protestant in its character, if not in its constitution—that its Republican success has been mainly founded upon its Protestant religion, that other sys-



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tems of faith are not in harmony with true civil and religious liberty, that the bill before us is a legitimate subject of legislation, and that we are called upon to uphold and encourage all who are seeking to secure civil and religious independence from the control of a despot power. . . .<sup>16</sup>

In the course of his speech, Senator Brooks harked back to oaths supposed to be taken by Jesuits, bishops, and others, "in which the destruction and extirpation of Protestants and heretics is most heartily vowed." He appealed to history for testimony of illustrations of papal tyranny and finally wound up with the charge that Archbishop Hughes had fifty-eight pieces of property deeded to himself, not as a trustee for the Catholic Church, but in *propria persona*.

The latter allegation precipitated a controversy between the two, Senator Brooks making such unfounded and untruthful charges against Archbishop Hughes that the latter exposed him in a series of letters to the daily papers of the period which, together with Brooks' allegations, form the volume popularly known as *Brooksiana*.

The bill, however, passed in spite of the fact that the Archbishop had satisfactorily refuted the contention of the Buffalo trustees.<sup>17</sup> Catholics, however, offered no resistance to the bill. Not a single Catholic congregation in the State incorporated in the way prescribed by the act and the proponents of the law were placed on an offensive position. Finally on March 25, 1863, after the Know Nothing agitation had died out, the Legislature passed a church incorporation law which had been drafted by Charles O'Connor for Archbishop Hughes. It provided that the Archbishop or Bishop of a diocese, the Vicar General and pastor of the parish

may select and appoint two laymen, sign a certificate, showing the name or title by which they and their successors shall be known and distinguished as a body corporate by virtue of this act, . . . and thereupon such church or congregation shall be a body corporate, by the name or title expressed in such certificate, and the said persons so signing same shall be trustees thereof.<sup>18</sup>



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A subsequent amendment to this act in 1895 brought the system further into harmony with Canon Law by requiring the sanction of the Bishop or Administrator for the validity of the corporate acts of the board.<sup>19</sup>

When Archbishop Hughes died, he conveyed all the real estate except certain lands in Jefferson County of which he was in possession (the old La Farge estate, the site of the first seminary), including the church of St. Peter, to Bishops McCloskey, Kenrick, and Fitzpatrick as joint tenants and not as tenants in common, and appointed them executors of his will. In 1864 they conveyed St. Peter's to the administrator of the diocese, the Very Reverend William Starrs. On June 22, 1869, a certificate of incorporation of "The Church of St. Peter" was duly recorded:

Whereas, in pursuance of an Act entitled "An Act supplementary to the Act entitled 'An Act to provide for the incorporation of religious societies, passed April fifth, eighteen hundred and thirteen,' passed March 25th, 1863, we, John McCloskey, The Most Reverend, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of the Diocese of New York; William Starrs, the very Reverend Vicar General of said Diocese; Revd. William Quinn, now the Pastor of the Church of Saint Peter, erected in the City of New York, County of New York, have selected and appointed Andrew Clark and Patrick Daly, two Laymen, members of said Church, for the purposes of the said Act mentioned."<sup>20</sup>

Archbishop McCloskey, to whom Father Starrs had deeded St. Peter's after the end of his administratorship, gave over by deed to the new corporation all his right, title, and interest in the premises.<sup>21</sup> Since then, no change in the corporate title of the church or the ownership of the property has been made.

Father Quinn possessed remarkable administrative qualities and under his direction the work of redemption went on until all but \$7000 of the debt was paid off. Besides this handicap that had to be overcome, new expenses had to be met. The commercial progress of the downtown area led to large stores being erected on Vesey Street in the rear of the church. The excavations for these structures threatened the south wall of the church to such

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an extent that a new wall twenty feet high had to be erected, with iron pillars and solidly braced, in order to make the building firm. This, together with a new iron railing around the church involved an immediate expenditure of more than \$20,000.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Farley, *John Cardinal McCloskey*, 142 f.

<sup>2</sup>*Brooksiana*, 22 f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 25 f.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 32 ff.

<sup>6</sup>*Abstract of the Title of the Church of St. Peter*, Chancery Office, New York.

<sup>7</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 185.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 185 f.

<sup>9</sup>Circular Letter to the Clergy and Laity, March 16, 1852, *Ibid.*, 187.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 193.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>13</sup>*Op. cit.*, IV, 466.

<sup>14</sup>Section IV of the Act printed in *Brooksiana*, 50.

<sup>15</sup>*Op. cit.*, IV, 466.

<sup>16</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 194.

<sup>17</sup>*Brooksiana*, 73.

<sup>18</sup>Dignan, *op. cit.*, 207.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 208.

<sup>20</sup>*Certificate of Incorporation of The Church of Saint Peter, New York City*, Chancery Office, New York.

<sup>21</sup>John McCloskey, Archbishop to "The Church of St. Peter," Deed dated July 7, 1869. Chancery Office.

## CHAPTER X

THE PASTORATES OF THE VERY REVEREND WILLIAM QUINN  
(continued), AND THE REVEREND MICHAEL J. O'FARRELL  
(1873-1881)

On July 2, 1853, a solemn requiem Mass was celebrated for the repose of the soul of one who was dear to the heart of St. Peter's congregation. He had been a member of it for sixty-six years and of him Father Quinn who spoke at the ceremony said:

Though no relative was left to mourn for him, yet many present would feel that they had lost one who always had wise counsel for the rich, words of encouragement for the poor, and all would be grateful for having known him. . . . There were few among the clergy superior to him in devotion and zeal for the Church and for the glory of God; among laymen, none.<sup>1</sup>

Such was the eulogy paid to a humble man of color, Pierre Toussaint, born a slave in Santo Domingo.

His life in New York was spent in constant service to his fellowmen, both white and black, and the charities of which he was the author shall never be recounted in full.

Pierre Toussaint is probably the most outstanding Negro Catholic in the history of New York.<sup>2</sup> Born about 1766 in the town of St. Mark, Santo Domingo, he was brought to New York as a slave of the Bérard family. The death of his master and the loss of the family fortune placed Madame Bérard in serious financial straits. Toussaint, having learned the art of hairdressing in New York, soon acquired as a *coiffeur* a fashionable clientele and earned a sufficiently comfortable living to support Madame Bérard as well as to effect the emancipation of some of his relatives and friends.

Toussaint strove in every way to make the situation of his beloved mistress lighter. Yet, it was not long before she finally succumbed to an infection of the throat. On her death-bed she insured Toussaint's freedom by insisting that his emancipation papers be made out and Toussaint afterwards purchased the



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freedom of his sister Rosalie and his future wife, Juliette Noel, whom he married in 1811.

By this time, Toussaint had become the most fashionable hair-dresser for the ladies of New York Society, possessing particularly the patronage of the French families.

Toussaint and Juliette having no children of their own, adopted Euphémie, the daughter of his sister Rosalie, who died several months after her birth in 1815. She was a sickly child but the Toussaints succeeded by ceaseless care and devotion in improving her health.

For Toussaint, St. Patrick's, the first Catholic Orphan Asylum, was a particularly worthy charity, his interest in it extending over a long period of time. As one of its promoters, he maintained a regular list of subscribers from whom it was customary for him to collect. It was Toussaint's annual custom to take Euphémie to the Orphan Asylum on her saint's day when they would bring with them a large basket of "buns, jumbles, and gingerbread." Euphémie, who regularly wrote two letters a week to her uncle—one in English and one in French, gave some evidence of her childish glee, when after one of these visitations, she wrote her uncle saying it would be a nice thing to invite all the orphans home some afternoon to tea.<sup>3</sup>

Others of these charming letters deal with the coming to New York of the first Italian opera company and her wish that she could sing as well as Madame Malibran, its prima donna.<sup>4</sup>

Euphémie's health began to fail as she entered her fourteenth year and for Toussaint there was no rest from the solicitous cares of the sick room. Their friend, Doctor Power, devoted himself to uncle and niece and helped Pierre to become resigned to the inevitable. When she passed away Toussaint was broken-hearted. The effect of the loss, however, was that of causing Toussaint to devote more and more of his time to deeds of charitable kindness.

These charitable deeds did not consist alone of gifts of money to those in need, for Toussaint's charity was more Christian than that. His was the charity of doing good wherever the occasion

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presented, of counseling the weak, giving courage to the timid, reclaiming the vicious, visiting the sick, and comforting the sorrowful. Particularly memorable was his work during the recurrent epidemics of yellow fever in New York. During these sieges, Toussaint more than once entered deserted streets, invaded barricaded areas and nursed unfortunate victims to health in his own home. A sick priest in a Canadian seminary, an American missionary in Haiti, a seminarian who wrote from Rome that he completed his studies with Toussaint's aid were among those whose appeals for help show that there was an intimate personal relationship between Toussaint and those whom he assisted. One of the greatest works of charity in which Juliette was united with him was in bringing up colored boys one after another, sending them to school, and after they were old enough, teaching them a useful occupation. A friend who once told him that he was richer than anyone she knew and asked, since he had more than he needed for himself, why he did not cease work, received the following reply: "Madame I have enough for myself, but if I stop work, I have not enough for others."<sup>5</sup>

Toussaint was a devout parishioner of St. Peter's. Throughout the papers that he left are many references to his *St. Pierre*. In view of the paucity of source material dealing with the early history of the church, the Toussaint collection is all the more valuable. There are pew rent receipts dating from 1822 to 1842 from which we learn that he occupied Pew Number 25. Once when a Catholic lady was visiting some white friends of Toussaint, she wished to attend Mass at St. Peter's and asked Toussaint, for a seat in his pew. He said "Certainly, Madam, you shall be accommodated." He met the lady at the door of the church and conducted her to another pew that was vacant. "I expected to sit in your pew," she said. "No, madam," he replied, "it would not be proper."<sup>6</sup>

Likewise in the Toussaint collection are requests from Doctor Power for him to attend the meetings of the Society of St. Peter, whose purpose was the liquidation of the church debt. Among other things, there is an announcement of 1842 regarding the Society of the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>7</sup>

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In 1842 Pierre Toussaint was the victim of a thoughtless and undeserved insult by an officious usher at St. Patrick's Cathedral. When the incident came to the attention of the Board of Trustees, the latter body through their president, Louis Binsse, who was a beloved friend of Toussaint, wrote the following apology which expressed the regard which they had for him:

It would be difficult for me to express to you the grief which has been caused me, by the insult which you have received in the Lord's house. It has given me all the more pain, because, wishing to have order in the Church, it was I who begged this gentleman to be one of the masters of ceremony. This young man is truly very repentant for it, and he has been reprimanded most severely by several of the Trustees.

Everybody knows, my dear Toussaint, that if God by His will, has created you as well as your good wife, with a black skin, by His grace He has made your hearts and souls as white as snow. While many others (and you know them well) to whom God has given a white skin, having repulsed this same grace, have made their souls, and hearts also, as black as coal.

You have been disgusted, my dear friend, by such an insult. I can well believe it; I should have been so, as much as you, and perhaps more than you, because you are human and I also ..... If by our weakness we resent insult, by His grace it should be forgotten. For my part, I should find myself more at ease, seated in the house of the Lord between you and your wife, and the good Cabresse, than beside many other persons whose skin is as white as satin. In the house of the Lord there is no distinction, God looks at the heart, but never at the color of the skin.

These are the sentiments of all the Trustees, and of him who is most sincerely your friend.<sup>8</sup>

Toussaint possessed the friendship of white and black alike. He, however, never forgot that his color separated him from white men and he always spoke of himself as a Negro. By the members of his own race whom he helped unstintedly, he was highly respected.

The live practical faith of Toussaint was an inspiration to his friends, Catholic and non-Catholic, black and white alike. There



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are many letters which are evidence of the nurturing of friendship through religion. His exemplary conduct and his piety were a source of admiration to all. Among the letters from the well-known Schuyler family, who were non-Catholics, are the following excerpts:

Heaven listens to the prayers of the good and pious Toussaint. . . .<sup>9</sup> They have an English service every Sunday here, to which I am now going every Sunday all by myself. . . . I have returned . . . the Service is performed in a Catholic Chapel, with all the insignia. . . . I thought of my dear Toussaint and I send my love to him . . . tell him I think of him very often. . . . I never go into one of the churches of his own faith without remembering my own *St. Pierre* and nobody has a better saint. . . . I am glad to hear he is better, and his good Juliet. . .<sup>10</sup>

I go to the Catholic Churches all over. They are grand and ancient. . . . I always remember *my own St. Pierre*. I often kneel and pray with my whole heart. Ah, dear Toussaint, God is everywhere, I meet him in your Church & mine, & in the broad waste & the full city.<sup>11</sup>

Many a non-Catholic learned of the Faith through this living exemplar of it. Miss E. F. Cary of Boston, who became a convert, said:

His life was so perfect, and he explained the teaching of the Church with a simplicity so intelligent and so courageous, that everyone honored him as a Catholic. He would explain our devotion to the Mother of God with the utmost clearness; or show the union of natural and supernatural gifts in the priest; or quote our great spiritual writers in a way to account best for the faith that was in him. When I was young I used to hear Protestants speak with reverence of two Catholics—the great Fénélon and the humble Pierre Toussaint,—and it made a strong impression on my mind.<sup>12</sup>

After the death of his wife Juliette, Toussaint spent his few remaining years even more assiduously in charity. Though his health was failing he went through all weathers to daily Mass, a practice which he never once failed for sixty years, until a few months before his death. The rest of the day was spent in painfully working his way through the city on errands of mercy. "Toussaint, do get into an omnibus," said some one, thoughtless-



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ly. "I cannot, they will not let me," he replied, in perfect good humor. Early in June of 1853, he was taken sick. Fortified with the rites of the Church, attended by two Sisters of Charity who visited him, he passed away on June 30, 1853. St. Peter's on the day of his burial,

was well filled with men, women, children, nuns, and charity sisters; likewise a most respectable collection of people of his own color, all in mourning. Around stood many of the white race, with their eyes glistening with emotion. When Juliette was buried, Toussaint requested that none of his white friends would follow her remains; his request was remembered now, and respected; they stood back as the coffin was borne from the church, but when lowered to its last depository, many were gathered round his grave.<sup>13</sup>

Toussaint was buried beside Juliette and Euphémie in the churchyard of Old St. Patrick's Cathedral, Mott Street.

During the Fall of 1854, the interior of St. Peter's was renovated and frescoed by R. Molini, who was well known at the time as an artist of merit. On Sunday January 14, 1855, the parishioners and priests of St. Peter's enjoyed a gala day—the first Sunday after the complete decoration of the church. A full choir sang Mozart's Twelfth Mass, and the sermon was by Doctor Forbes, pastor of St. Ann's Church, who took as his text St. Luke, I, 48-49, and preached on the Immaculate Conception. In describing the appearance of the church on this occasion, the *Freeman's Journal* referred to the work of Vallejo, which had been brought back from Mexico by Father O'Brien, and which adorned the wall in back of the main altar:

[It] is a magnificent painting of Our Lord surmounted by the Arms of his Holiness Pope ——— and on either side is an angel worshipping, all of which taken in connection with the exquisite taste presents a truly striking and beautiful appearance. The paintings in fresco by R. Molini are heroic sized statues of SS. Peter and Paul on the right and left of the altar. The ceiling is also done in fresco, on each corner is a statue of one of the four Evangelists. There are likewise beautiful figures symbolic of the delivery of the Keys to St. Peter. The adoration of the Wise men and the entombment of Our Blessed Saviour. The ornamentive decora-

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tion of the windows too fail not to attract attention. When lit up the whole interior presents a very rich and brilliant appearance.<sup>14</sup>

Father Quinn, in 1860, was able to make an unexpected trip to Ireland during which he visited his aged mother and other relatives and friends whom he had not seen in twenty years. Father Quinn was a passenger on board the steamer *Connaught*, with the intention of merely visiting a clerical friend of his at Newfoundland. The *Connaught*, however, in consequence of a dense fog, after remaining off the land for thirty-six hours, and failing to reach the shore, was obliged to carry Father Quinn off to Ireland where he made a short visit and returned in the company of the Reverend Thomas Farrell, then pastor of St. Joseph's.<sup>15</sup>

Among the priests who were stationed at St. Peter's during these middle years were the Franciscan Father Jerome Nobriga (1847); the Dominican Father Thomas Martin (1848-1849), whose excellent work in bringing peace and prosperity to the churches at Utica and West Troy induced the Bishop to place him at St. Peter's at a time when the affairs of the church were in a disheartening state, and who later succeeded Father Quinn as pastor at Rondout; Fathers Terence Scollon (1849-1850); Edward Murphy (1849-1850); Michael A. Madden (1850-1851) who had just been ordained by Bishop Hughes before his assignment to the parish and who was shortly after appointed pastor of Perth Amboy and South Amboy; Daniel Mugan (1851-1852) who was the first priest to be ordained by Archbishop Hughes and who left to become pastor to Ellenville in Ulster County; Bernard O'Hara and Stephen Ward (1849);<sup>16</sup> John R. Comerford (1851); William Everett (1853); Patrick McCarty (1853);<sup>17</sup> Daniel Durning (1855-1858); James L. Conron (1858-1862); Michael McKenna (1862-1864); Patrick J. Maguire (1863-1864); Gabriel A. Healy (1864-1868); John Hughes (1865); James Quinn (1865-1867); Michael C. O'Farrell (1869-1873); Michael J. O'Farrell (1869-1872); and Michael J. Phelan (1873). One of the most lovable priests who served at St. Peter's from 1854 until 1870, the time of his death, was the venerable John Shanahan. Born in Ireland in 1792, he was

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ordained by Bishop Connolly on September 19, 1823, and served during his early years in Utica and Troy. In the later years of his life he lost his sight but nevertheless continued in the active ministry until his death at the age of seventy-eight, when the *Freeman's Journal* remarked: "Exceeding simplicity of mind and purpose and a most sacerdotal spirit always characterized this good priest."<sup>18</sup>

Father Quinn, who had attended the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866 as theologian of the Archbishop of San Francisco, and who was also one of the Procurators of the Clergy at the Third New York Synod, in 1868, journeyed to Rome to attend the Ecumenical Council held in 1870. Meanwhile, the parish was left in the care of the Reverend Michael J. O'Farrell, one of his assistants. Upon his return, Father Quinn delivered a very interesting lecture upon the Council, the Pope, and the Dogma of Papal Infallibility.<sup>19</sup>

Upon the death of the Very Reverend William Starrs, pastor of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Father Quinn was appointed Vicar General of the Diocese (April 27, 1873),<sup>20</sup> and on May 1, he was transferred to the cathedral as pastor. During his twenty-four years of service at St. Peter's he had brought the church from debt and disgrace to a position where it was free from financial embarrassment. When he left on May 1, there was a debt of \$10,638.12 which, with the elimination of the old trustee system, was not a serious incumbrance.<sup>21</sup> Concerning the personality of Father Quinn, John Talbot Smith says:

This Father Quinn was indeed a character. Although still young, he had proved himself a good manager. He had none of the charming qualities of Father Power; he was severe, brusque, a hater of shams, a strong partisan, and a thorough business man. Nevertheless he was an upright and able man, and rose to eminence, becoming vicar general to Cardinal McCloskey, rector of the cathedral, domestic prelate, and successful director of diocesan finance. . . .<sup>22</sup>

He ruled with energy caring little for popular opinion or personal feelings, aroused much opposition by his methods, but never turned to the right or left for any obstacle but the interference of the Cardinal, whose plans and wishes he carried out with fidelity and skill. He was actually named



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coadjutor of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, for the purpose of correcting its financial tangle, but the Cardinal persuaded him to remain in New York. He was an absolutist in church government, and a striking contrast in this respect to his superior. For the conventions he had not the slightest regard, and walked his own path through custom and etiquette with perfect unconsciousness of their demands.<sup>23</sup>

Father Quinn was elevated to the rank of Domestic Prelate in December 1881, and remained at the cathedral as pastor and Vicar-General of the diocese until 1887, when upon the advice of his physician he went to Europe, but his health did not improve. On April 15 of that year, while on his way back to this country he died at Paris. His remains were brought back here and rest in Calvary Cemetery.<sup>24</sup>

The Reverend Michael J. O'Farrell (1832-1894) who succeeded Father Quinn was born in Limerick, Ireland on December 2, 1832. In 1848, he entered the Missionary College of All Hallows, and three years later, the Seminary of St. Sulpice, Paris, where he completed his course and was raised to the diaconate. On August 18, 1855 he was ordained priest in Ireland. Returning to Paris, he became a member of the Congregation of St. Sulpice, with the view of being employed in the mission to Canada; but was granted the signal honor in that famous institution of filling the chair of Dogmatic Theology in the seminary.

He remained in this position for a year but his health was affected by excessive study and he was sent to Montreal where he was for some years a member of the theological faculty at the Grand Seminary. He was stationed for four years at St. Patrick's Church, Montreal and spent in all eight years in Canada in active missionary work. In July 1869, he became an assistant at St. Peter's and three years later was made pastor at Rondout. He was recalled, however, in May 1873 to assume charge of St. Peter's Church.<sup>25</sup> John Talbot Smith spoke of him as having

enjoyed a reputation for wit and bibliomania, for oratorical power and social charm. He had been a member of the Sulpician Community, from which he withdrew to enter the diocese of New York, where he became the preacher and orator for notable occasions, stored up a magnificent library,



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and helped to bring about that smoothness of clerical social life which was later to become the normal condition. His oratory was marked by elegance of diction, deep sentiment and fine arrangement, rather than by force, and his writings had the same character, being very rich in allusion and quotation, as became a great reader of books.<sup>26</sup>

Father O'Farrell remained at St. Peter's as pastor for eight years during which time his most outstanding work was in improving the educational facilities of the parish. In 1874 the site of the present school building on Church and Cedar streets was purchased, no doubt as a result of the sudden impetus given to the enrollment of the boys' school by the arrival of the Christian Brothers in the preceeding year.

Among the priests who assisted Father O'Farrell at various times were: the Reverends Charles R. Corley (1873-1877); John P. McClancey (1873-1875); Joseph H. Hayne (1874-1876); A. Canary (1875-1876); W. J. O'Kelly (1876-1886); John B. O'Hare (1877-1883); and Peter McNamee (1879-1888).

In 1881 Father O'Farrell was promoted to the episcopacy. Trenton, New Jersey, which had originally been a part of the New York Diocese and which, since 1853, had formed a part of the Diocese of Newark, was created an independent see on July 15, 1881. Father O'Farrell was consecrated its first Bishop on November 1, 1881 and remained there until his death on April 2, 1894, when his remains were at first interred in the cathedral cemetery, Trenton, and transferred in 1905 to a vault in the chapel of St. Michael's Orphan Asylum, Hopewell, New Jersey.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Hannah F. Lee, *Memoir of Pierre Toussaint, Born a Slave in St. Domingo*, Boston, Crosby, Nichols and Company, 1854, 113 f.

<sup>2</sup>He is no relation to the more famous L'Ouverture Toussaint, who was born in 1745 in the same country.

<sup>3</sup>Euphémie to Toussaint, September 21, 1827. Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 57 f.

<sup>4</sup>Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 56 f.

To Dominick Lynch, Jr., who like his father, was a leader in religious, social and commercial activities, is due the credit of having introduced Italian opera to New York. He arranged in London with the Garcia troupe to come over in one of his own ships. The first performance, given in the Park Theatre, on Park Row near Ann Street, was on November 29, 1825. Manuel Garcia, a famous tenor, and his daughter Maria Felicita were the stars of the company. She was married in St. Peter's to a merchant named Francis Eugene Louis Malibran during the stay of the company in New York. (Thomas F. Meehan, *Records and Studies*, XVIII, 126 ff.)

<sup>5</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*, 87.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>7</sup>Ryan, *loc. cit.*, 44 ff.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 43 ff.

<sup>9</sup>N. A. Schuyler, February 25, —, Charleston, *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>10</sup>N. A. Schuyler, August 20, 1847; Baden Baden, *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>11</sup>N. A. Schuyler, Munich, August 26, —, *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>12</sup>E. F. Cary, "The Story of Pierre Toussaint," *Ave Maria*, XXXVII, 574.

<sup>13</sup>Lee, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup>January 20, 1855 cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 161 f.

<sup>15</sup>*The Irish News*, October 6, 1860.

<sup>16</sup>*Records and Studies*, IV, 116, 121.

<sup>17</sup>According to Archbishop Corrigan's Register he remained at St. Peter's until 1855.

<sup>18</sup>August 13, 1870; cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 191.

<sup>19</sup>*The Irish Citizen*, September 17, 1870.

<sup>20</sup>He signs his name as such to a confirmation of 216 boys and 254 girls which he entered on the Baptismal Register on the above date.

<sup>21</sup>Report of Reverend M. J. O'Farrell, May 1, 1873 to January 1, 1875; cited in McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 200.

<sup>22</sup>*Op. cit.* I, 170.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 302 f.

<sup>24</sup>*Records and Studies*, IV, 102.

<sup>25</sup>Shea, *The Catholic Churches of New York City*, 21 ff.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, *op. cit.*, I, 303 f.

## CHAPTER XI

THE MODERN PERIOD: PASTORATES OF THE RIGHT REVEREND  
MONSIGNOR JAMES H. MCGEAN, LL.D. (1881-1926) AND  
THE REVEREND JAMES E. NOONAN, LL.D. (1926- )

After Father O'Farrell had been made the first Bishop of Trenton, Cardinal McCloskey appointed the Reverend James H. McGean to the pastorate of St. Peter's, a pastorate he was to occupy for an uninterrupted period of forty-five years, and of longer duration than that of any of his predecessors.

Father McGean was born of Hugh and Catharine McGean on January 29, 1841 in New York City. His father at first intended to enter the priesthood and received a classical education at the famous Nelson's Academy of Downpatrick, Ireland. Although he himself did not enter Holy Orders, he had the happiness to see his son ordained in St. Patrick's Cathedral by Bishop Bayley on September 24, 1864.

Father McGean entered the College of St. Francis Xavier in 1855, and was graduated with distinction in 1861. His theological studies were pursued at the Grand Seminary, Montreal from which he returned to the city for his ordination in 1864. Thereafter he became an assistant priest at St. Patrick's Old Cathedral, which continued to be until 1879 the Cathedral Church of New York. St. Patrick's at that time had within its parish limits large hotels, places of amusement, the homes of prosperous citizens and all the evidences of the vigorous, throbbing activities of a varied city life. Father McGean remained here until 1871 when Archbishop McCloskey chose him, while still only a young man, as pastor of Transfiguration Church, a large and important parish adjoining the Cathedral.

Here he was especially interested in the parish schools, which during those years had an average daily attendance of nearly 1,000 pupils and held a high place among the best schools of the city. Father McGean while here is said to have been the first pastor in New York City to hold special services for his Italian parishioners.<sup>1</sup>

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One of the first tasks to which Father McGean as pastor of St. Peter's devoted himself vigorously was to prepare the church for solemn consecration to Divine worship. There were many at this time who felt that the change in parish conditions as evidenced by the conversion of private residences into places of business would make it inexpedient to consecrate the edifices which might be more advantageously sold to provide means of erecting a church elsewhere in the city. When these objections were presented to Cardinal McCloskey, he declared with firmness, "St. Peter's Church will never be alienated. Go on, therefore, with your contemplated work of preparing for the consecration."

This event took place on Sunday, November 22, 1885, one hundred years after the founding of the parish. Cardinal McCloskey having died the previous month, His Grace, Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan consecrated the church, assisted by the Very Reverend Monsignor Farley, the Reverend Doctor McDonnell, and the Reverend Fathers McGean, Preston and Riordan. Bishop Loughlin of Brooklyn was the celebrant of a solemn Mass at which Bishop O'Farrell of Trenton preached the sermon. In the evening the Archbishop officiated at Solemn Vespers at which Bishop Ryan of Buffalo preached.

At the close of the Mass, the Archbishop gave the pontifical benediction and proclaimed an indulgence of one year in virtue of the consecration of St. Peter's. For each anniversary of the event to be celebrated on the third Sunday of November, an indulgence was conceded to all who might visit the church and pray under the usual conditions.<sup>2</sup>

Bishop O'Farrell in his historical sermon on St. Peter's stated that in celebrating its history

we celebrate the growth of Catholicism throughout the land. . . Has it not grown up not merely in New York City, from one little church of St. Peter's, to the 173 churches today in the Diocese of New York alone, without counting the seven other dioceses into which this state and Jersey have been divided? And this little church had had only itself a stray priest, has changed so that now four hundred priests serve the church in the New York diocese alone.<sup>3</sup>



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As a preparation for the consecration, Father McGean had the church renovated in many respects. One feature of the improvements was that the twelve blind windows along the top of the side walls were opened, increasing the lighting and ventilation of the church. Another was the replacement of the old window sashes by stained glass.

Though these improvements gave the church a fine appearance, through the generosity of the children of Edward and Ann Smith, Father McGean, who in 1904 was raised to the rank of Domestic Prelate by Pope Pius X, reconstructed and redecorated the interior of the edifice, replacing the old wooden with three beautiful marble altars. The body of the former main altar in dark Egyptian marble remained the centerpiece of the new altar in pure Carrara, a reproduction of the magnificently carved woodwork that made St. Peter's famous. The walls and ceilings were also redecorated and frescoed by the Roman artist, Ilario Panzironi, who considered his work at St. Peter's which was completed in 1905 as his masterpiece.

During the time of Monsignor McGean, the character of the parish continued to change to one of stores and then to skyscrapers. As late as 1890 a passenger on a North River ferry boat could discern the square red tower of the Produce Exchange, the tall spires of Trinity and St. Paul's Churches, the dome of the World Building and the towers of Brooklyn Bridge rearing themselves above the general skyline of the city.

Several influences caused New York to engage in skyscraper expansion. One was the constant growth of population on Manhattan Island where in the downtown area every bit of space was covered by the old-type buildings. Need for greater facilities, the improvement of the elevator and the advance made in steel construction conditioned the erection of taller and taller offices and loft buildings. When Monsignor McGean first went to St. Peter's the parish was still residential.<sup>4</sup> Here and there were five-story building. At that time a ten-story structure was "tall" and more than ten stories constituted a "skyscraper." Speaking in 1921 after the celebration of the one hundred and thirty-seventh anniversary of the parish, Monsignor McGean said: "When I

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came to St. Peter's, I had a flock of some 25,000 souls, the most of them Irish. It has dwindled to 7,000 souls of twenty nationalities, most of them Polish and Ruthenian."<sup>5</sup> On another occasion he remarked that "only about 1,500 of the 7,000 persons who still dwell within the parish limits of St. Peter's are Catholics. . ."<sup>6</sup>

Monsignor McGean worked along quietly, changing his church services to fit the changes in the neighborhood, until within recent years its major work has been for transients on week days. Speaking of these changes thirty years ago, it was said in a newspaper of the day:

St. Peter's church is . . . visited daily by many hundreds of devout Catholics, who are employed in the vicinity and who take the opportunity, when passing, of spending a few moments in the house of God. At any time of the day, but especially during the noon hour, may be seen men and women, young, aged and in the prime of life, kneeling in the pews, praying with bowed heads to their Maker, or passing from station to station, making the Way of the Cross. The church is always open during the day and evening and is visited regularly by many times more people than reside in the parish. On last Holy Thursday the number of people who visited the Repository in St. Peter's numbered fully 20,000. . . .<sup>7</sup>

Consequently, Monsignor McGean was the first Catholic pastor of the diocese to institute mid-day services when, on October 20, 1906, the Passionist missionary, Father Alexis Cunneen, opened a mid-day mission at St. Peter's in connection with a parish mission, the first time that mission exercises were ever held at that hour in this country. This innovation was so successful that they were quickly followed by other noonday services in St. Peter's and other churches—during the Advent and Lenten seasons. There was established at St. Peter's the weekly mid-day Holy Hour, a devotion that attracted throngs of the people to the church every Thursday. Special Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament in St. Peter's which was fostered as early as Father Kohlmann's time, and which was encouraged by Doctor Power and his successors, received a further stimulus when episcopal permission was granted

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to Monsignor McGean for the daily Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

During Monsignor McGean's time the facilities of the lower chapel were offered for the use of Syrian Catholics of the Greek rite, many of whom settled in New York in the latter decade of the last century. In 1891 the Reverend Abraham Bechewate, a Basilian monk of the Congregation of the Holy Saviour, from Saida, Mount Lebanon, was sent to this country by the Patriarch of Antioch to take up missionary work among the Syrian (Melchite) Greek Catholics of this country. His first work was in New York City in the parish of St. Peter where from 1899 to 1916 he conducted services for the Syrians of the Greek rite.

Within the present boundaries of St. Peter's parish are two mission churches for Syrians located on Washington Street. The first, St. George's (Melchite) was opened in 1920 after the congregation had been located in St. Peter's chapel from 1899-1916 and for a few years in leased quarters. The other, St. Joseph's (Maronite) Church was opened in 1916 after having been located in rented quarters and the lower chapel of St. Peter's Church (1904-1906).

On October 8, 1911 the memory of Governor Thomas Dongan, who up to that time was the only Catholic ever to be Governor of New York, was honored by the unveiling of a tablet. It was placed on the east end of the portico by the Columbian Assembly, Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, under the inspiration of their chaplain, the Reverend Thomas Phelan. Several thousand persons participated in a civil ceremony which was opened by an invocation delivered by Monsignor McGean. Governor John A. Dix, Congressman John Fitzgerald and Archbishop Farley each delivered an address on this historic occasion. The governor dwelt upon his predecessor's career and the significance of the liberal charter for which he was sponsor, saying in part:

Within less than the range of a rifle shot from where we stand was asserted two hundred and twenty-eight years ago almost to the day, for the first time in American history, the right of the people to participate in their own government—the foundation law of our entire political structure. In no Colonial documents elsewhere are the words "people met in



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General Assembly" to be found, and this phrase marks the first epoch in the political history of New York as we know it and in the rise and development of free institutions in America. This first Representative Assembly of New York Province met within the walls of Fort James, just below us, near the Battery, on October 14, 1683, and its presiding officer and master spirit was Thomas Dongan, appointed September 30, 1682, Governor of the Province by James, Duke of York, in the reign of Charles II.

Our assemblage, large as it is, is but a unit in the millions of humanity who have down the ages since his time benefited through this brave and broad minded legislation of Governor Dongan. It is a pleasure to recall that this generation in two centuries toward retrieving from the desolate débris of time the services to America and mankind of this great man, and it is a privilege to participate in erecting on this historic and revered ground of St. Peter's the memorial tablet which we unveil today, for we recognize in the graceful and enduring countenance of Thomas Dongan one of the greatest and good men of the time. . . .

With the coming of Thomas Dongan as Governor, the entire atmosphere, politically and commercially, of the Colony was changed. He was of the best blood of Ireland, a nephew of Tryconnell, an heir to the Earldom of Limerick, to which in later years he succeeded. He was a cosmopolitan and a democrat, a soldier and a statesman. His heart was kind, his soul sincere and his training of the broadest. The "Charter of Liberties" as the first act of the Dongan Assembly came to be called, revealed a deep appreciation of popular rights and individual liberties, and a practical grasp of the theory of government, outlining a programme that developed almost a century later in the Declaration of Independence.<sup>8</sup>

In eulogizing the career of Dongan, Congressman Fitzgerald said:

Contemplation of the career of Thomas Dongan arouses alternating emotions of surprise and admiration. Of an aristocratic family, he was democratic, affable, and genteel in manner. Driven, in his youth, from his native land by intolerant laws which threatened his liberty and prevented the free exercise of his religion, he was most liberal in his treatment of those with whom he differed. A soldier for more than thirty years, from his early youth he had lived in the camp through many arduous campaigns; yet he had the polish



## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

and charm of the cultured man of leisure, and he accumulated an astonishing knowledge of governmental affairs. Devoted to the royal house of the Stuarts, and loyal to its princes, he is pre-eminent for his services to the cause of free institutions. Had he been tyrannical, domineering, vindictive, and bigoted, an oppressor of the people and a filcher of their treasure, it would have occasioned little comment, and he would not have been unique among his contemporaries; but he is conspicuous for his moderation, his liberty, his rugged honesty, his marvelous statescraft, and his inspiring devotion to every public duty. With profit is his career studied with advantage may his conduct be emulated; with justice is his memory honored.<sup>9</sup>

Archbishop Farley before pronouncing the benediction, stated that the committee was to be congratulated on selecting St. Peter's Church as the place for maintaining the memorial, that while the present edifice dated back to 1836 yet it nevertheless contained within its walls the foundations of the original church of 1785, the first Catholic Church in New York.

The memorial which was unveiled during the ceremony reads:

IN MEMORY OF  
THOMAS DONGAN

BORN 1634

DIED 1715

EARL OF LIMERICK      GENERAL IN THE  
ARMIES OF ENGLAND AND FRANCE  
IRISH PATRIOT AND DEVOTED CATHOLIC  
GOVERNOR OF NEW YORK 1683-1688

---

FATHER OF THE FIRST REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY  
AND "THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES"  
GRANTING POPULAR GOVERNMENT, RELIGIOUS TOLERATION  
TRIAL BY JURY, IMMUNITY FROM MARTIAL LAW  
FREEDOM FROM ARBITRARY ARREST  
FRAMER OF THE FIRST CITY CHARTER FOR  
ALBANY AND NEW YORK  
FOUNDER OF LATIN SCHOOLS UNDER CATHOLIC  
AUSPICES AND TEACHERS

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

THIS TABLET

ERECTED BY THE COLUMBIAN ASSEMBLY

FOURTH DEGREE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

OCT. 8TH 1911

October 4-8, 1914 the golden sacerdotal jubilee of Monsignor McGean was celebrated by a series of religious and public exercises. Solemn Mass was sung on Sunday October 4, in the presence of Cardinal Farley followed on other days of the week by testimonial receptions tendered by the parishioners, the children of the parish, and the mid-day visitors of St. Peter's.

On July 29, 1918, 200 Australian and New Zealand troops who were awaiting transportation abroad attended Mass at St. Peter's. They were welcomed by Monsignor McGean and after Mass Chaplain A. J. Wright, of the Australian command, assisted by the Reverend James E. Noonan, gave the Benediction.

The long and devoted career of Monsignor McGean came to an end on February 13, 1926. At the age of eighty-five, the oldest priest in the Archdiocese of New York succumbed to heart trouble. Cardinal Hayes, who had just arrived home from Europe, visited him on February 6 and brought him the personal blessing of the Pope. At the bedside of his old friend, the Cardinal, who was once a pupil in Transfiguration School and who once remarked that he still remembered some of the instructions given by the old Monsignor, conversed about the events of the latter's long life.

On February 15, a Mass for the children of the parish was said at which Father John W. Curran reminded them that "there was none dearer to his priestly heart than the children. . . . You remember that, passing on the streets you would run up and clasp his hand and follow him in groups and finally hear him say in his own sweet way, 'God bless you my children; love God and be good.'" Next day a mid-day solemn Mass for the noonday congregation was sung and that afternoon and evening the body lay in state during which time over 10,000 men, women and children walked past the bier. Barclay Street paid its tribute the following day to the venerable rector by closing all places of busi-

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

ness while the solemn requiem was being chanted, a tribute of love from non-Catholic and Catholic alike. His remains rest in St. Raymond's Cemetery.

Long hours in the confessional had earned for the Monsignor the title of the *Curé d'Ars* of Barclay Street." Some days he spent six and seven hours there, a practice which he continued until shortly before his death. He was a diocesan consultor for thirty-two years, the chairman of the archdiocesan commission on music, and the first in the diocese to hold the office of promoter fiscalis. Over half of the moderate wealth he possessed at the time of his death was willed to churches and charitable institutions.<sup>10</sup>

The Reverend James E. Noonan, successor of Monsignor McGean, had been an assistant at St. Peter's from 1902 to 1921, when he was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Tuxedo, New York.

Father Noonan was born May 15, 1876 in St. Stephen's parish, New York City. His parents, John F. and Anne E. Keegan Noonan were both born in Ireland and brought to America in childhood. The family moved to St. Cecilia's Parish in Harlem where James Noonan received First Communion and Confirmation. There being no Catholic school attached to the parish, he attended and was graduated in 1891 from Public School 83. He next attended St. Francis Xavier High School and College from which he was graduated in 1897. Upon completion of his seminary training at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York, he was ordained in St. Patrick's Cathedral on May 24, 1902. During his pastorate of five years at Tuxedo, Father Noonan erected, at a cost of \$50,000, a Spanish mission-style chapel at Sloatsburg, New York.

Shortly after his appointment in June 1926 to St. Peter's, the memory of Monsignor McGean was perpetuated in the erection of a new marble altar rail fashioned at Rome. It was dedicated on September 25, 1927. The following year, on September 30, 1928, a sacred concert and organ recital by Pietro Yon marked the dedication of a new Kilgen organ in memory of the late Monsignor, who was a member of the Papal Music Commission

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

inaugurated by Pope Pius X. The altar rail was the gift of the parishioners and the organ was given by members of the Smith family who were for many years parishioners and generous benefactors of St. Peter's Church.

On May 9, 1931 a memorable ceremony occurred at St. Peter's Church when hundreds of Catholic women gathered at the historic shrine to participate in ceremonies for the promotion of the Cause of Mother Seton's canonization. Cardinal Hayes presided and celebrated Mass and Father Noonan made the address of welcome. The sermon was preached by the Reverend Joseph B. Code who said in part:

There are innumerable ties that bind the early days of the church in this country with old St. Peter's, but there is none quite so sacred to thousands of our Catholics as Elizabeth Bayley Seton. . . . Indeed, he who would know the story of Mother Seton must come here for its beginning. . . .

Mother Seton's story here at St. Peter's has about it a certain epic quality, inasmuch as it symbolizes the heroic struggle of the ancient Faith to assimilate to itself the genius and the courage of a new people, and to take its rightful place in the shaping of their destiny. This church, my dear friends is the Bethlehem of a spiritual adventure. Great battles have been fought on this Island of Manhattan, but none greater than the battle which this tablet will commemorate. Hence it is fitting that we should come here, where she conquered, at once to recognize the importance of her victory, and to commemorate it as one of the outstanding triumphs of the Faith in the religious annals of America.<sup>11</sup>

Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, who was then on his way to France to visit his sick mother, and consequently unable to attend the celebration, paid the following tribute to Mother Seton in a telegram sent to the committee:

In my childhood days my father often told me of Mother Seton, for she was a very close connection of the Roosevelt family and her sister-in-law was, I think, my great-aunt. Her distinguished nephew, Archbishop Bayley, was a first cousin of my father, James Roosevelt, and they were very close friends.

In our family we have many traditions of the saintly character of Mother Seton. . . .<sup>12</sup>



## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

This ceremony was preparatory to a pilgrimage to Rome conducted two months later by American women bearing a petition with 100,000 signatures asking for the canonization of Mother Seton. During the course of the ceremonies a tablet was erected on the west front of the church portico bearing the following inscription:

IN MEMORY OF  
ELIZABETH ANN BAYLEY SETON  
BORN NEW YORK CITY AUG. 28, 1774  
DIED EMMITSBURG, MD. JAN. 4, 1821  
MADE PROFESSION OF FAITH  
AND RECEIVED FOR THE FIRST TIME  
THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH  
IN OLD ST. PETER'S  
1805 AND 1806  
FOUNDRESS OF  
AMERICAN SISTERS OF CHARITY

---

THIS TABLET IS ERECTED  
BY HER  
SPIRITUAL DAUGHTERS COMMUNITIES  
OF

EMMITSBURG, MD.  
NEW YORK, N. Y.  
CINCINNATI, O.

ST. LOUIS, MO.  
HALIFAX, N. S.  
CONVENT STATION, N. J.

GREENSBURG, PA.

MAY 9, 1931

In 1932 St. Peter's was formally reopened after an extensive renovation of the interior of the church and the dedication of a new chapel in the basement. Because of the many benefactions to St. Peter's of the Smith family, it was named in their memory. The improvements were made under the architectural direction of Robert J. Reilly and consisted of a new floor, new pews, new heating and lighting systems and new decorations. When the marble altars were installed in 1905 sections of the side galleries nearest to the altars were removed. The church remained in this

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

form until Father Noonan decided to complete the work of removing the side galleries and remodelling the rear gallery to increase its seating capacity. A new series of stained glass windows wrought by Charles J. Connick of Boston were thereafter installed, the theme of all being centered around significant events in the life of Christ. These windows, conceived in the rich renaissance tradition, flood the remodelled church with soft light.

The basement of the church was originally used as a school room. More recently it had been used, although poorly adapted for the purpose, for occasional school entertainment and church services.

Now, all unsightly piping has been removed from view, mechanical ventilation installed and the floor lowered to give good height. A terrazzo pavement was laid, new pews and stained glass windows were added and a sanctuary with three new marble altars was erected.

In grading the floor for the new chapel, the remains were unearthed of some of the pioneer Catholics of New York who were buried in the church yard surrounding the old edifice. Father Noonan had the relics transferred to a newly constructed vault in the center aisle of the chapel on which was placed the following inscription:

WITHIN THIS VAULT LIE  
THE REMAINS  
OF THOSE WHO  
WERE BURIED IN  
OLD ST. PETER'S  
CHURCH YARD  
1786-1838  
RE-INTERRED HERE  
THE 23RD DAY OF JUNE  
1932  
JAMES E. NOONAN, P. R.  
PASTOR  
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE  
AMEN

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

The new chapel was dedicated on November 27, 1932 by Bishop Dunn who was the celebrant of a solemn pontifical Mass. The Very Reverend Aloysius J. Hogan, S.J., president of Fordham University, during the course of his dedicatory sermon, said:

What mean these stones? For one hundred and forty-seven years St. Peter's Church has been the spiritual refuge and house of devotion for millions of Catholics, who, stealing away from mart or office, come here for prayer, consolation and strength. For one hundred forty-seven years St. Peter's has stood out as an enduring symbol of the undying and unwavering faith of our fathers.

What mean these stones? Aged and colored with years of service, St. Peter's stands as a monument to the Catholic faith of the people of New York City, and now to this temple of God, beautiful with the beauty of years, there has come a new adornment. Father Noonan, the beloved pastor of this parish, has brought to these sacred walls a new and exquisite beauty, while keeping all the ancient features which have endeared this church to New York, and which endeared it to the heart of the venerable Monsignor McGean. . . . And to the benefactors whose generosity has made possible the joy of this day, we give them thanks and pray that God will shower His blessings on them.

What mean these stones? These stones, colored with age, stand forth as an enduring monument of faith, and a symbol of the devotion and generosity of the founders, the priests and the people of this parish.<sup>13</sup>

In appreciation of the work of Father Noonan the faculty of Fordham University awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in May 1935. The citation read upon the occasion reviewed his early career and said in part:

In 1926 our beloved Cardinal Archbishop graciously brought you back to the cherished scenes of your first priestly labor, appointing you permanent pastor of Old St. Peter's. There, with artistic taste you have restored and redecored the interior of that venerable edifice and with rare devotional attractiveness you have converted the basement into a memorial chapel.

Therein you have with characteristic thoughtfulness and generosity, accorded Fordham University immeasurable aid in carrying on the numerous spiritual activities of the several

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

departments of our Manhattan Division. Therein our Faculty members and students have been and are renewed in spirit by the religious organizations and spiritual exercises which your gracious helpfulness have made conveniently possible.

Devoted Jesuit alumnus, annointed priest, zealous pastor, friend, father and guide of countless numbers who revere and love you we are happy in your abundant joy of your priestly service.

Wherefore Fordham University, wishing to express publicly her heartfelt gratitude and affectionate appreciation, delights to confer upon you, James Edward Noonan, the honorary degree of LL.D.

In November, 1935 St. Peter's Church celebrated its sesquicentennial anniversary, an event memorable in the annals of American Church history. It was in anticipation of this event that this record of one hundred and fifty years was compiled and it is the hope of the author that it may serve in part to mark the importance of this historic occasion.



## Old St. Peter's, New York

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>*Catholic News*, February 20, 1926.

<sup>2</sup>*The Catholic Review*, Dec 5, 1885.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>Barclay Street, which originally was named for the Reverend Mr. Barclay of Trinity Church is known throughout the English speaking world as the center of the Catholic publishing and church goods trade of the United States. As early as 1817 Higgins, a pioneer publisher of the street was located at (old) Number 16.

<sup>5</sup>*New York Times*, February 14, 1926.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup>*The Catholic News*, June 3, 1905.

<sup>8</sup>*The Irish World*, October 14, 1911.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup>*The Catholic News*, February 20, 1926; the *New York Times*, June 18, 1926.

<sup>11</sup>*The Catholic News*, May 16, 1931.

<sup>12</sup>When Elizabeth Bayley Seton was three years old her mother died, and her father, Dr. Richard Bayley, married again, and among the children of this second marriage was Guy Carlton Bayley, whose convert son, James Roosevelt Bayley, became Archbishop of Baltimore. Archbishop Bayley was a first cousin of the father of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

<sup>13</sup>*The Catholic News*, December 3, 1932.

## CHAPTER XII

### ST. PETER'S FREE SCHOOL (1800-1935)

The history of free public Catholic parish education in the State of New York and in those parts of New Jersey that were originally a part of the Diocese of New York had its beginnings with the establishment in 1800 of St. Peter's Free School, which has maintained a continuous existence for one hundred and thirty-five years. At the time that St. Peter's Free School was established no public school existed in New York City. Private tutoring establishments and the charity schools of Trinity, the Dutch Reformed, and the Presbyterian denominations were the only facilities for primary education in New York City.<sup>1</sup> These religious public schools in the city were recognized by the State which contributed to their support out of the proceeds of the Common School Fund, a share of which was assigned to the municipality.

In 1795, the Governor recommended to the Legislature the "establishment of common schools throughout the State" and that body passed an Act on April 9, 1795 which appropriated \$50,000 a year for five years, for the purpose of encouraging and maintaining schools in the several cities and towns of the State. This legislation expired in 1800 and five years later, a law was thereupon enacted by which the proceeds of 500,000 acres of public land were to be set aside as a fund to be accumulated until its annual income should reach \$50,000, when the income was to be applied to the support of the schools. This sum was enlarged by various appropriations, and in 1819 it had reached the sum of \$1,200,000. By the Constitution of 1822, the Common School Fund was rendered inviolable and directed "to be devoted in perpetuity to the advancement of common schools. The productive capital of the fund was increased by degrees, so that in the year 1842 it amounted to \$10,000,000."<sup>2</sup>

It was the duty of the State Superintendent to apportion among the school districts of the State the income of the School Fund.

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

The Town Commissioners were to receive the fund and subdivide it among the town school districts. All funds necessary to the maintenance of each school above that provided from the share of the district in the Common School Fund and not raised by taxation were to be defrayed by means of a rate bill, which was a tuition fee charged to parents and guardians of children in attendance at the school. Thus three sources of revenue were provided for the maintenance of the schools—the Common School Fund of the State, the fund raised by town taxation, and the rate bill.

From the time of the creation of the school fund in 1805, a share of it was assigned to New York City. But although public schools by this time were established in the rest of the State, none such existed in the City of New York, whose school system as has been shown was of private and religious foundation. Accordingly, the Common School Fund was distributed to the denominational schools and to the schools established by the Free School Society, a private corporation which was organized in 1805 "for the Education of such poor Children as do not belong to or are not provided for by any Religious Society." This society not only received by law a share of the State fund but it obtained the residue of its support by taxation, the voluntary donations of individuals, and a slight tuition fee, which was analagous to the rate bill in the country district schools.

St. Peter's Free School, which had been created by the Board of Trustees in 1800<sup>3</sup> and which until its building was completed in 1803 had hired rooms for school purposes, was the largest of the denominational schools in 1805, having in attendance about 100 scholars.<sup>4</sup> It consequently petitioned the Legislature for a portion of the fund. Referring to this petition, Father Hurley in a letter to Bishop Carroll in 1806 said:

We have another petition before the assembly relative to the Charity School, which if successful will enable us to place this institution on a better footing than it has hitherto been. The applications for admission having been so numerous of late, we have established another school in the Bowery, which we have chosen to prevent the Catholic children from going to other schools in the winter, as they have done heretofore.

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

The entire number of scholars is about two hundred and twenty and will in a short time exceed three hundred.<sup>5</sup>

The petition was granted, for, on March 26, 1806, the Legislature passed an act directing the Common Council of the City of New York

to pay to the trustees of the Roman Catholic Congregation in New York the like sum as was paid to the other congregations respectively, by virtue of an Act, entitled "an Act directing Certain Moneys to be Applied to the Use of the Free Schools in the City of New York."<sup>6</sup>

Under the authority of this Act, St. Peter's Free School received the sum of \$1,565.78 on May 5, 1806 as its share of the fund, this amount being the first public aid received by the trustees. On that day, the Common Council

Ordered that the Mayor issue his warrants on the Treasurer to pay Andrew Morris Esqr advance for School Monies for St. Peter's Church to be repaid by the State agreeably to law.<sup>7</sup>

That the trustees took the obligation of supervising the school room seriously is evident from the resolutions of the board which indicate a practice of delegating two of their number each month to visit the school. For example,

Resolved, that Mr. James Walsh and Capn John O'Connor be a committee to visit the upper School room for the ensuing Month.<sup>8</sup>

On August 10, 1810 the Board of Trustees

Resolved, that the salary of Mr. James Moffett, Master of the Free School attached to this Church, for his strict attention to the duties of his Situation, be increased to four hundred per annum, commencing from the 1st of May last.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the Schools at this time, including those of the Free School Society followed the method of Joseph Lancaster. In 1801, he had opened a school in London in which elementary instruction was given to large classes at a small expense by a single teacher with no assistance except that rendered by student monitors themselves. In 1818 Charles Picton arrived from England and was employed by the Free School Society to assume charge of their new school, No. 4. It was not opened until May



## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

1, 1819 and during the interval between his arrival and the latter date he was employed at the same salary granted him by the Free School Society in reorganizing St. Peter's Free School on the Lancasterian system. An idea of the results obtained may be had from the following minutes of the Board of Trustees, held on May 2, 1820:

Jas. J. McDonnell Reported from the Committee appointed to Visit the Free School, that they have Visited the Free School Several Successive Mornings to Witness the giving Lessons According to the Lancastrian System by Mr. Langdon the present teacher that they are Completely Satisfied with his Conduct, with the progress of the Children under his Care, and believe him fully competent & Extremely attentive to the Duties of his Situation & that they were informed by him that he had no wish to Resign.<sup>10</sup>

From 1806 until 1814 no portion of the common fund was allotted to the parish school but in 1814 payments were resumed in accordance with a law passed March 12, 1813

directing that the portion of the School Fund received by the city and county of New York shall be apportioned and paid to the trustees of the Free School Society, the trustees or treasurers of the Orphan Asylum Society, the Society of the Economical School, the African Free School, *and of such incorporated religious societies in said city as supported or should establish charity schools* who might apply for the same.<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, the fund was distributed, among others, to the schools of the various religious societies in New York City, the law not being applicable to the rest of the State in which free common schools had been established. In 1820 the Bethel Baptist Church opened a school, which, like the others, was admitted to participation. Meanwhile, however, the Free School Society, by rigid economy and the comparative smallness of the expense per scholar in large schools conducted on the Lancasterian plan, had accumulated a surplus which, by special legislative enactment in 1817, they were permitted to expend in the construction of additional schools under their management. Since the Society was organized solely for educational purposes it was

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believed that no perversion of the State fund could ever occur in the use of the money for such a purpose. In 1822, however, the Bethel Baptist Church sought and obtained from the Legislature a similar privilege to expend any surplus in erecting new buildings and opening them for schools. Two additional schools were thereupon opened by the Baptist Society. This precipitated a controversy in which the Free School Society expressed its alarm over "the propriety of the participation of any religious sectarian school" in the common fund. On the other hand, it was contended that the Free School Society had become "a monopoly in the absorption of public funds" which "by the law of the State as by common right, each religious body was entitled to its proportionate share."<sup>12</sup>

The Free School Society petitioned the Legislature in 1823 for a repeal of the law granting privileges to the Baptist Church, so far at least as related to the expenditure of surplus moneys and for an amendment to the law relative to the distribution of the School Fund, so as to prevent any religious society entitled to a participation in the fund from drawing for any other than the poor children of their respective congregations.<sup>13</sup>

The nineteenth annual Report of the Free School Society exposed irregularities in the management of the Bethel schools and in the expenditure of their portion of the common fund and the society renewed its petition to the Legislature in 1824 for a restriction of the participation of religious societies in the school money of the State.

Any such restriction, of course, would have applied as a consequence to St. Peter's Free School as well as the school attached to the Cathedral, which was established in 1817. On January 4, 1824 the trustees of the two churches sent the following report to the Superintendent of Schools:

New York, Jan. 4, 1824.

To John V. N. Yates, Esq.,  
*Superintendent of Common Schools.*

Sir:

The trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral and St. Peter's Church have received your letter of the 5th of May last,

## *Old St. Peter's, New York*

requesting such information as they possessed relative to the free schools attached to those churches, on the several subjects embraced in the resolution of the Assembly of this State, of the 25th of February, 1823, a copy of which resolution is annexed to your letter. In compliance with your wish, they now respectively state that the free school attached to St. Peter's Church was built in the year 1803. The lease of the lot on which it stands was purchased in the same year for £860 currency, and the expense of erecting the building was £1,000 currency, both which sums, making together £1,860 currency, or \$4,650, were paid from private donations or legacies left for that purpose. That the school attached to St. Patrick's Cathedral and that attached to St. Peter's Church were both under one denomination, that of St. Peter's Church, until the year 1817, when the congregations of those churches were separately incorporated, and the information which we now give comprises both schools under the denomination of the free school attached to St. Peter's Church, until the above-mentioned year, 1817, from which period the accounts are distinct and separate. They further respectively state that an Act of the Legislature of this State, passed 26th of March, 1806, directed the Mayor, Aldermen, and Commonalty of the city of New York to pay to the trustees of the Roman Catholic congregation in New York the like sum as was paid to the other congregations respectively, by virtue of an Act, entitled: "An Act directing Certain Moneys to be Applied to the Use of the Free Schools in the City of New York," and that under the authority of said Act, the trustees of St. Peter's Church received from the Corporation of this city on the 5th of May, 1806, the sum of \$1,565.78. This was the first aid the free school of St. Peter's Church obtained from public funds, and from that period until the year 1814 they did not receive any portion of the school fund, and not having from the year 1805, the period from which the information you require is to commence, until the year 1814, made any returns or kept any account of the number of scholars, they can not for these nine years give the particulars required accurately, and have therefore in the enclosed account given an average for that term, from the best information they could collect. From the year 1814, when they commenced receiving regularly a portion of the school fund, the account presented is accurate, and we believe will be found to agree with the records kept by the Commissioner of the school fund. The



## Old St. Peter's, New York

building in which the school attached to St. Patrick's Cathedral is now kept was erected in the year 1819. The upper floor is appropriated to the purposes of the church and the basement story to those of the free school. The estimated proportion of the latter is \$3,200, which was paid from the proceeds of a sermon preached for the benefit of that school, from a legacy left to said school, and from the funds of St. Patrick's Cathedral. The average expense of educating each scholar at the free school attached to St. Peter's Church was \$3.70½. The average expense of educating each scholar at St. Patrick's Cathedral was \$3.02¼.

Referring to the enclosed statement, we remain, with respect,

Your obedient servants,

The Boards of Trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral and  
St. Peter's Church,

JAMES J. McDONNELL,

*Secretary.*

### STATEMENT

of the number of scholars, salaries paid to teachers, extra expenses and public moneys received in and for the free school attached to St. Peter's Church and St. Patrick's Cathedral in the State of New York from the year 1805 to the year 1823.

Year	ST. PETER'S CHURCH FREE SCHOOL			Public
	No. of Scholars	Salaries to Teachers	Extra Expenses	Money Received
1805	500.....	\$1,600.....	\$400.....	00
Eight to 1813 averaged as 1805	} 4,000.....	12,800.....	3,200.....	\$1,565.78
1814		486..... 1,600.....	400.....	1,861.73
1815	500.....	1,600.....	400.....	1,840.00
1816	516.....	1,600.....	400.....	1,816.32
1817	344.....	800.....	200.....	1,124.88
1818	361.....	800.....	200.....	1,072.71
1819	350.....	800.....	200.....	1,007.12
1820	356.....	800.....	200.....	1,059.99
1821	328.....	800.....	200.....	731.44
1822	316.....	800.....	200.....	619.36
1823	311.....	800.....	200.....	510.04
	8,368	\$24,800	\$6,200	\$13,209.37



## Old St. Peter's, New York

### ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL FREE SCHOOL

Year	No. of Scholars	Salaries to Teachers	Extra Expenses	Public Money Received
1817	243.....	\$800.....	\$200.....	\$794.61
1818	275.....	800.....	200.....	817.16
1819	306.....	800.....	200.....	880.51
1820	359.....	800.....	200.....	1,068.92
1821	371.....	800.....	200.....	827.33
1822	345.....	800.....	200.....	676.20
1823	417.....	800.....	200.....	683.88
	2,316	\$5,600	\$1,400	\$5,748.61 <sup>14</sup>

The trustees, fearing that the legislation suggested by the Free School Society as a result of the Bethel controversy would adversely affect the interests of the parish schools, wrote the following memorial to John Morse, one of the State legislators representing the city:

New York, March 20, 1824.

To JOHN MORSE, ESQ.,

SIR:

The trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral and St. Peter's Church, charged with the care of the free schools attached to those churches, beg leave to request your attention and that of the other members of the delegation from the city of New York to the Legislature of this State, on the subject of the measures now in progress for a change in the law regulating the distribution of the school fund. From a report made by the committee to the House of Assembly, apprehensions are entertained that there is a project on for withdrawing from the schools under the directions of the religious societies, that aid which they have been accustomed to receive from the common school fund. This measure, they consider, will be neither liberal nor politic. Children who are made to commence their daily exercises by prayer are not likely from that circumstance to be worse citizens than those who do not follow that practice, nor receive any religious instruction, and it would be strange indeed to discriminate between those descriptions, and disqualify the former. Should such a measure pass into a law, the religious societies, it is believed, will be obliged to reduce the salaries of their teachers so low that persons well qualified will not accept those situations,

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and they must employ persons less capable. They therefore request that the delegation of this city, whom they are proud to consider their representatives, shall oppose any change in the law respecting the school fund, to the prejudice of the schools under their care, and that if such a measure should be proposed, sufficient time shall be given to all the parties interested to apply to the Legislature on the subject.

Signed by order of the boards of trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral and St. Peter's Church.

JAMES J. McDONNELL,

*Secretary.*<sup>15</sup>

On April 19, 1824 the trustees instructed the treasurer to "pay the Rev. Mr. Power the sum of \$100 for and in consideration of his expenses in going to Albany on the affairs of the free schools."<sup>16</sup> Ministers representing the Dutch, Baptist, Episcopal and other churches likewise actively opposed the recommendation of the Free School Society.<sup>17</sup>

The final action taken by the Legislature was a surprise to all parties interested, for it passed a law in 1824 transferring the whole question of local distribution of the School Fund to the Common Council of the City of New York, with full powers to make such assignment as the body deemed proper. The controversy was thus transferred to settlement by the Common Council. A committee of the council, after hearing both viewpoints, and "deeming that the School Fund of the State was purely of a civil character, designed for civil purposes, and that the intrusting of it to religious or ecclesiastical bodies was a violation of an elementary principle in the politics of the State and country,"<sup>18</sup> reported against distributing *any portion* of the School Fund to the schools of religious societies and in 1825 recommended an ordinance to that effect to the consideration of the Common Council. It provided that the fund be distributed to the "Free School Society, Mechanics Society, the Orphan Asylum Society, and the trustees of the African Schools." The Trustees of St. Patrick's Cathedral and St. Peter's Church presented a petition for consideration whereupon after the committee reported the ordinance, Mr. Hone, one of the councilmen, proposed an amendment to its first section. This section read as follows:

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Be it ordained by the Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the City of New York in Common Council Convened, Pursuant to the authority vested in them, by an act of the Legislature of the state of New York, entitled "An Act relating to Common Schools in the City of New York" passed November 19th, 1824, that the institutions, which shall be entitled to receive of the Commissioners of the Common School fund, payable to, and raised in the said City, are hereby designated to be, The Free School Society of New York, The Mechanics Society, The Orphan Asylum Society, and the Trustees of the African Free School.<sup>19</sup>

Mr. Hone's amendment would have inserted after the words "Trustees of the African Free School," the following addition: and the Trustees of such incorporated religious societies in said Cities as support, or shall establish Charity School, who may apply.

Provided that the religious societies above named shall not be allowed to receive pay for any scholars, except those whose parents or Guardians are in the habit of attending their respective places of worship.<sup>20</sup>

The amendment was defeated by a vote of 13 to 3, whereupon the council proceeded to pass the law as framed by the committee.

In January 1826, the Free School Society became by State charter "The Public School Society" and since probably many parents felt that to have their children educated without direct payment was akin to acknowledging themselves paupers, the Public School Society began to receive pupils at a tuition of twenty-five cents to two dollars per quarter, yet retaining the original free provision for any who could not afford a payment. St. Peter's School followed the lead and on the recommendation of Doctor Power, the trustees voted, May 3, 1826, a small fee for tuition.<sup>21</sup>

The Free School Society, however, soon realized that the tuition system resulted in disaster for them. Complaints were made by parents that the Society had no right to assess a charge since it received the money of the School Fund and the day after the payments were effective the register shrunk from 5919 to 4654 pupils, of which latter number 1690 were on the free list.<sup>22</sup> The parents of many of the remaining number paid for one or two



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quarters so as to have their children looked upon as "pay scholars" but evaded any further payment. Furthermore, a *caste* spirit developed and children who paid looked down upon those who could not pay. Referring to these two classes, Boese reported that, "The Roman Catholic, the Episcopal, Methodist, and other churches opened wide the doors of their free schools to the dissatisfied of the one class, and, by establishing cheap pay schools, drew off large numbers of the other."<sup>23</sup> A special school census of 1829 conducted by the Common Council reported that of the whole number of pupils in the schools of the city, namely 24,952, only 6,007 were in the schools conducted by the Public School Society, more than 15,000 being located in private schools and more than 2500 in charity schools.<sup>24</sup> In 1832, assured of adequate means by an additional state tax for the support of their schools, the Public School Society abolished the tuition system.

Although the change in name from the "Free School Society" to the "Public School Society" and the popular name by which its schools were known, namely "Public Schools," may have led many to conclude that they were similar to the free common schools in the rest of the State which were under the direct supervision of the State, nevertheless the Public School Society was a private corporation which originally had been organized "for the education of such poor children as do not belong to any religious society." The founders of the Society, among whom was De Witt Clinton, were men of well known character who saw in such an organization the opportunity to perform a great educational work. The charter of the Society, however, was soon thereafter changed to admit the children of any religious persuasion and its professed policy was one of non-sectarianism. Nevertheless, it continued to consider as one of its primary objects "without observing the peculiar forms of any religious society, to inculcate the sublime truths of religion and morality contained in the Holy Scriptures."<sup>25</sup> The variety of religious beliefs of the members of the Society and the dominating influence of the Friends, however, reduced the devotional exercises to a simple reading of a portion of the Bible to the whole school at the opening of the morning session, and the regular daily "use of the



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sacred volume, or of the New Testament, by the pupils as a reading-book."<sup>26</sup>

Many people, however, felt that this was not sufficient for positive religious training and for a time a voluntary association of religious teachers of various denominations gave catechetical instruction every Tuesday afternoon in the school room to pupils grouped according to ascertained preferences. This was abandoned in 1816. In 1819 the trustees ordered "that the children be taught once a week to repeat some suitable passages out of the tracts on the subject of the destructive use of ardent spirits" and this was followed by a "widely circulated address to parents and guardians abounding with moral and religious advice both for themselves and their children, . . . setting forth the importance of the Scriptures as a rule of life, of the observance of the Sabbath, and the attendance of the children upon the Sabbath Schools."<sup>27</sup>

In 1820, two English ministers on a religious tour, the Reverend Messrs. Moffit and Sommerfield, visited the several schools of the Society, and soon after, the pupils of all the schools, with their teachers and monitors, assembled in the large Baptist Church in Mulberry Street, where Mr. Moffit offered what he considered an appropriate discourse. This incident convinced the Society that it had overstepped the bounds of prudence, and although no similar occurrence happened thereafter, yet the Society continued its efforts along moral and religious lines by the purchase of 2,000 copies of the *Universal Non-sectarian Catechism* and the *Scripture Lessons*, a reading book for the advanced classes.

By 1840 opposition to the Public School Society, as an exclusive recipient of the School Fund, by the Protestant denominations that had conducted religious public schools, had disappeared; but early in that year, the trustees of the eight Catholic free schools, among which were those of St. Peter's, feeling that the schools of the Public School Society had an atmosphere offensively anti-Catholic and that their school books and libraries were "stuffed with sectarian works against the Catholic religion, made application to the Common Council, in whose hands the law still vested the distribution of the school moneys, for a proportionate

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share of the School Fund. The State Superintendent of schools had called the attention of the Legislature to the fact that there were more than 5,000 children taught in the eight Catholic schools of the city, and to the apparent injustice of excluding them from the benefit of the fund to which as taxpayers they were contributors.

The petition (February 17, 1840) to the Common Council was rejected and on March 20, 1840 the Catholics held a general meeting at which a memorial to the Legislature was adopted. Bishop Hughes, who had been in Europe, returned on July 18, and two days later at a meeting presided over by Doctor Power, the Bishop made an address in which he criticised the work of the Public School Society. In an "Address of the Catholics to their Fellow Citizens of the City and State of New York," August 10, 1840, he showed that while the Society professed to be non-sectarian, it was "entirely favorable to the sectarianism of infidelity, and opposed only to that of positive Christianity." He was surprised that the conscientious persons of all sects could not see the evil of the system—not that he denied to an unbeliever any rights to which he was entitled but that the Common Council had necessarily transferred "to the interest of infidel sectarianism, the advantages which are denied to Christian sectarianism of every kind."<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, there were "other grounds of distrust and danger," for:

Besides the introduction of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment, with the prevailing theory that from these even children are to get their notions of religion, contrary to our principles, there were in the class books of those schools false (as we believe) historical statements respecting the men and things of past times calculated to fill the minds of our children with errors of fact, and at the same time to excite in them prejudice against the religion of their parents and guardians. These passages were not considered as sectarian, inasmuch as they had been selected as mere reading lessons, and were not in *favor* of any particular sect, but merely *against* the Catholics. We feel it is unjust that such passages should be taught at all in schools, to the support of which we are contributors as well as others. But that such books should be put into the hands of *our own* children, and that in

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part at our own expense, was in our opinion unjust, unnatural, and at all events to us intolerable. Accordingly, through very great additional sacrifices, we have been obliged to provide schools, under our churches and elsewhere, in which to educate our children as our conscientious duty required. This we have done to the number of some thousands for several years past, during all of which time we have been obliged to pay taxes; and we feel it unjust and oppressive that whilst we educate our children, as well we contend as they would be at the public schools, we are denied our portion of the school fund, simply because we at the same time endeavor to train them up in principles of virtue and religion. This we feel to be unjust and unequal. For we pay taxes in proportion to our numbers, as other citizens.<sup>28a</sup>

On September 21, 1840 one of several meetings was held by Catholics at which a "Petition of the Catholics of New York For a Portion of the Common School Fund" was drawn up and sent to the Board of Aldermen. The petition quoted from the annual reports of the Society, in which were expressions such as the following: [the Society] are aware of the importance of early religious instruction and that none but what was

exclusively general and scriptural in its character should be introduced into the schools under their charge. [Annual Report 1827.]

The age at which children are usually sent to school affords a much better opportunity to mould their minds to peculiar and exclusive forms of faith than any subsequent period of life. [Annual Report 1832.]

The Trustees are deeply impressed with the importance of imbuing the youthful mind with religious impressions, and they have endeavored to attain this object, as far as the nature of the institution will admit.<sup>28b</sup> [Annual Report 1837.]

The petition cited the annual reports of the Society as evidence of its interest in imparting "early religious instructions, religious impressions, and religious influence," which although essentially anti-Catholic, the Society claimed as not sectarian;

But if in giving the education which the State requires, they [the Catholics] were to bring the same influences to bear on the "susceptible minds" of their *own* children, in favor, and not against, their *own* religion, then this Society contends that it would be sectarian.<sup>29</sup>



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They further condemned the school books of the Society as containing passages which were not only historically false to the injury of Catholics, for which the Society might be excused, but which were libelous to Catholics as well. The petitioners refuted the charge of the Public School Society that the granting of the petition would in effect be appropriating money to the support of the Catholic religion and stated that if that could be proved, they would withdraw the claim altogether and they further indicated a willingness to have any portion of money allotted to them disbursed by non-Catholics, even the Public School Society. The latter Society contended that the law disqualified any schools which admitted any profession of religion from participation in the School Fund, while the petitioners denied that the law did so, it merely delegating to the Common Council the authority to disburse the Fund to whatever schools or societies it determined were entitled to a share. They were willing in fact to fulfill the conditions of the law so far as religious teaching was proscribed during school hours. They accordingly asked for the eight Catholic schools, of which St. Peter's was one, to be placed upon a proportionate equality with the schools of the Society in participation in the School Fund.<sup>30</sup>

Besides this petition, the Common Council received a remonstrance from the Public School Society and a protest from the Methodist Episcopal Church. A hearing before the Council was conducted on October 29-30, 1840 before a large audience of interested citizens. Bishop Hughes headed a delegation of Catholics including Doctor Power and Thomas O'Connor, the Society was represented by two able lawyers, Theodore Sedgwick and Hiram Ketchum, while Reverend Doctors Bangs, Bond, and Peck represented the Methodist Episcopal Churches. Bishop Hughes being the first to address the board, began by explaining the Catholic petition, the justice of its grounds, and refuted the counter charges that had been made against it. Mr. Sedgwick defended the Society and contended the Council had no right to grant the petition. He spoke with courtesy, in contrast to the virulence and invective of his co-defendent, Mr. Ketchum, who charged the Catholics with trying to drive out the Bible from the schools. Bishop Hughes



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replied that Catholics asked no modification of the Public School Society or its schools. He declared tellingly that

all those remarks of that gentleman have been out of place; and for the rest, I conceive the true point has not been touched. Not one of our objections or scruples of conscience has he undertaken to analyze, nor the grounds on which they exist. When I gave those reasons for our objections, I thought some argument would have been urged fairly against them; but the only end the gentleman appears to have in view, is the preservation of the School Society, and to maintain that they have a patent right to the office.<sup>31</sup>

The following day Doctor Bond took the floor and argued that to grant the petition was to give money to sectarian teaching, and then engaged in a general attack on the Catholic Church. He was followed by the Reverend Mr. Reese who considered the schools as though they were State institutions and not those of a private society. The Reverend Doctor Knox, of the Dutch Reformed Church "insisted that public schools were Protestant institutions and held that Protestants could not yield to the Catholic claim." "Can Protestants, believing as they do believe, consent to be directly instrumental in elevating to strength and in cherishing a system like this? I think not."<sup>32</sup>

After these gentlemen had spoken, Doctor Spring of the Brick Presbyterian Church arose, and in the course of his remarks, said:

The gentleman [Bishop Hughes] has sought to prove that the present system leads to infidelity. Now, sir, *let no man think it strange that I should prefer infidelity to Catholicism.* Even a mind as acute as Voltaire's came to the conclusion that, if there was no alternative between infidelity and the dogmas of the Catholic Church, he should choose infidelity. *I would choose, sir, in similar circumstances, to be an infidel tomorrow.*<sup>33</sup>

Bishop Hughes was asked by the president of the board to sum up for the petitioners. In a speech that lasted for three and a half hours he attempted to refute the variety of charges that had been made by the previous speakers, most of whose charges dealt with religious doctrines not pertinent to the subject under discussion. He said:

They have represented us as contending to bring the Catholic Scriptures into the Public Schools. This is not true; but, I shall have occasion to refer more particularly to this by and by. They have represented us as enemies to the Protestant Scriptures "without note and comment," and on this subject I know not whether their intention was to make an impression on your honorable body, or to elicit a sympathetic echo elsewhere; but, whatever their object was, they have represented that even here Catholics have not concealed their enmity to the Scriptures. Now, if I had asked this honorable Board to exclude the Protestant Scriptures from the schools, then there might have been some coloring for the current calumny. But I have not done so. I say, gentlemen of every denomination, keep the scriptures you reverence, but do not force on me that which my conscience tells me is wrong. I may be wrong, as you may be; and as you exercise your judgment, be pleased to allow the same privilege to a fellow being, who must appear before our common God and answer for the exercise of it. . . . There is, then, but one simple question—will you compel us to pay a tax from which which we can receive no benefit, and to frequent schools which injure and destroy our religious rights in the minds of our children, and of which in our consciences we cannot approve? That is the simple question.<sup>34</sup>

I see the question stands precisely where it did before the gentlemen began to speak, and I see the same false issue, and I challenge any gentleman to say that it is not a false issue—persevered in to this very hour, so that our argument has not been moved one iota; there must therefore be something powerful in our plain, unsophisticated, simple statement, when all the reasoning brought against it leaves it just where it was before.<sup>35</sup>

Again, at a later date, he declared:

Eight or nine hours were wasted in the discussion of a theological tenet, but not one half hour was given to the only question which the Common Council should have permitted to come before them—namely, are the rights of this portion of the citizens violated or not? If so, are there in our hands, as the public guardians of liberty, the means to apply a remedy?<sup>36</sup>

On January 12, 1841 the Committee of the Common Council reported against the claim, whereupon the Catholics then appealed

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to the State Legislature for redress. The Secretary of State, John C. Spencer, to whom the petition was referred, reported against the exclusive power granted to the Public School Society in New York City and recommended that the State system of common schools be extended to the city. This action was bitterly fought by the Public School Society and its sectarian friends. A remonstrance was sent to the Legislature and Mr. Ketchum again represented them as counsel, while James W. McKeon and Wright Hawkes appeared for the petitioners, who this time consisted of a large number of citizens, Catholics as well as Protestants. Much to the surprise of the Native American and Whig parties, Governor Seward realized the justice of the Catholic claim and recommended in 1840 the establishment of separate schools. In the next year, his message to the Legislature declared that: "There are thirty thousand in this State growing up in ignorance. By their religious training they are practically excluded from the excellent schools of the Public School Society."<sup>37</sup>

Again, the Legislature remaining inactive, in 1842 he said: "It will be shown to you, the proper report, that twenty thousand children in the city of New York of suitable age are not instructed in the Public Schools, while the whole amount in the residue of the State not taught in the common schools does not exceed nine thousand."<sup>38</sup> While conceding the great importance of the work done by the Public School Society, he nevertheless declared that it had failed to command the confidence "reposed in the general system of the State, and indispensable to every scheme of universal education."<sup>39</sup>

During 1841 when the matter was before the Legislature and as the time for the election of new candidates approached, the Public School Society and its friends called upon the candidates of both parties to make a pledge before election to refuse the Catholic petition and the law proposed by Secretary Spencer. Catholics thus had no alternative but to vote for men pledged in advance against them. Several meetings were held by the Catholics at Carroll Hall to determine a course of action, and, it having been ascertained that several of the candidates had refused to take the pledge, four days before the election Bishop Hughes proposed



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an independent ticket, taking the unpledged candidates of either party and some others. The consequence was that 2200 voters broke away from either party and cast ballots for the independent ticket. The issue, thus forced to assume a political significance, soon caused a settlement.

Under the influence of the previous recommendations of Governor Seward, on April 9, 1842, the Legislature passed an Act extending the common school system of the State to New York City. These new ward schools were the beginnings of the present Public School system of the city. The schools of the Public School Society were permitted to continue side by side with the others and to share in the School Fund, which was not to be distributed to any school in which a religious or sectarian doctrine was inculcated or taught. The Public School Society was disappointed and its friends felt "that public education had received irreparable injury, and probably its death-blow."<sup>40</sup> In 1848, the privilege of erecting new buildings was definitely withdrawn from it, and, in 1853, it went out of existence, transferring all its property to the new Board of Education, in which body its members took seats.

Bishop Hughes, in writing to Governor Seward on March 22, 1842, congratulating the executive on the passage of the bill, said: "It is not precisely the Bill we should like. But it goes so much near it that we shall be willing to give it a fair trial."<sup>41</sup>

For a time, the reform had but little effect since Doctor Reese, a decided partisan in the controversy, was appointed as County Superintendent of Schools. Shea said:

When the school officers in certain wards decided that the compulsory reading of the Protestant Bible was religious sectarian teaching prohibited by law, he ordered the teachers to read it in defiance of the local authorities and reported the schools as having forfeited all right to draw any of the public money. . . . It was thus made painfully evident to Catholics that the schools under the new law would be used, even in defiance of law, to weaken the faith of Catholic children. This injustice made the church or parochial school an absolute and constant necessity.<sup>42</sup>

Thus sectarian influence and sectarian prejudice, which had led



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to the exclusion of state maintained schools conducted by religious societies, helped to bring about the formation of the present diocesan system of parish schools, of which St. Peter's Free School was the nucleus. They are really religious public schools whose establishment and maintenance does not imply any condemnation of the public schools or the purpose for which they were established, since the parish school aims to attain the same ideals as that of the public school. Yet, they teach not only what the public school teaches but religion and morality as well. It is upon this basis that Catholics to this day have been willing to build and support their own system, without yielding the point that, in justice, they have a right to compensation for the secular instruction imparted to their scholars which has saved to the non-Catholic public millions of dollars which would otherwise go to the support of these students if they were not otherwise provided for in parish schools. On the other hand, there are Catholics who feel that "if such State aid were accepted it could be done only at the cost of independence, that State aid would be the price of admitting State supervision to the extent of partial de-Catholicization."<sup>43</sup>

From the time of the establishment of St. Peter's Free School until 1831 the students were taught exclusively by laymen. In the Spring of 1831, however, Father Quarter visited Emmitsburg and at his solicitation and that of Father James Smith, the acting pastor of St. Peter's, three Sisters of Charity were sent to St. Peter's School.<sup>44</sup> Sister Lucy Ignatius accompanied by two members of her Community arrived in New York in June and took charge of the girls' school. They lived for a year in a little dilapidated frame house opposite the church until a better structure was arranged on the same site. Here they worked and taught until the brick school and convent was erected in 1838 on the east side of the Church.<sup>45</sup>

The *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac* in 1839 referred to St. Peter's Free School as "containing from five to seven hundred children. The boys are taught by male teachers, and the girls in distinct apartments by three Sisters of Charity."<sup>46</sup> Within a few years the number of Sisters was increased to five with Mother

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Mary Jerome Ely, for more than fifty years a prominent factor in the educational and charitable work of the city, as Sister Servant of St. Peter's Convent.<sup>47</sup>

Susan Clossy of St. Peter's parish, was the first Novice from New York to join Mother Seton's Community at Emmitsburg (May, 1809). She was the faithful nurse of Rebecca Seton during her illness and died May 6, 1823.<sup>48</sup>

When after differences as to administration details between Bishop Hughes and the Emmitsburg mother-house, the Sisters then in New York were permitted to form a new Community in 1846, "St. Peter's School for Young Ladies" was opened in the convent house at 16 Barclay Street. This school had four classes and in addition to the regular curriculum, French and Music were taught. Under the administration of Sister Mary Regina and later of Sister Irene, St. Peter's Free School gradually increased its enrollment until in 1872 there was a register of 850 pupils, 350 of whom were boys taught by lay teachers.

In 1873 the present parish school was opened by Father O'Farrell at a cost of nearly \$200,000 for school site and buildings. It was a spacious five story structure of red brick and granite trimmings at the corner of Trinity Place and Cedar Street. The Christian Brothers then began their work at St. Peter's with the boys, the girls remaining under the supervision of the Sisters of Charity. The ample facilities afforded by the new school together with the arrival of the Christian Brothers caused the register to increase in 1874 to the highest point it has since reached. In that year 1810 students, 880 of whom were boys, were enrolled in the parish schools.<sup>49</sup>

Since there were no public high schools in New York City until about 1897, St. Peter's School not only offered a primary education but also the core subjects of the present secondary school system. Students remained for three years in the eighth grade and the curriculum included physiology, hygiene, natural philosophy, astronomy, civil government, ancient, modern and American history, algebra, geometry, rhetoric, English literature, book-keeping, mechanical and freehand drawing, music, Christian doctrine and Bible history.

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The excellent work done at St. Peter's was attested by an exhibit which the school made at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893 and as a result of which it was awarded by the Commission of the Fair one of the first blue ribbons and certificates. The boys of the school received two medals at the World's Fair, one in map-drawing and the other in classwork.

Among the Sisters who taught at St. Peter's within recent years, the one most closely identified with the school was Sister Mary Alphonse. From 1885 to 1912 Sister Alphonse was Principal of St. Peter's School for Girls. Upon becoming Sister Servant of the convent, for the next three years she combined her duties as superior with teaching the highest grade (tenth) of the school, and remained at St. Peter's until 1920 when she completed an uninterrupted service of thirty-five years. Among the lay teachers, Miss Teresa Spring was reputed by Father Thornton, School Inspector, to be the best lay teacher in the Diocese of New York.

At first, only two Brothers were employed in the boys' department, Brother Alpheus, principal, and Brother Rowland, teacher of the first or highest class. The remaining classes still continued to be taught by lay teachers. In the following year Brother Constantius was added to the staff. St. Peter's Brothers' Community came into existence in January 1876, when a small house was secured at 101 Cedar Street. The community numbered eight Brothers of whom Brother Alpheus was Director. He remained Principal of the school until 1880 when his Superiors appointed him Director of De La Salle Academy. His successor was Brother Adelberian, during whose administration the Community home was transferred to a house on North Moore Street. In May 1888, the Brothers took up their final residence in 114 Cedar Street just around the corner from the school. Among the Brothers who served as Directors before the turn of the century were Brothers Abel, D. Joseph (1887-1892), Christian (1892-1897), and Henry (1897-1901).

Monsignor McGean took a personal interest in St. Peter's School, encouraging both teachers and scholars. He taught Latin to the students of the upper grades, awarded premiums for excel-

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lence in school work, and, during the early period of his pastorate, visited the school regularly to give religious instruction.

Within recent years, changes in parish conditions have resulted in a gradual decline in the number of students registered in the school. In 1934 the Christian Brothers were withdrawn because of the small register and today there are about 150 pupils, still taught by the Sisters of Charity.

For a period of one hundred and thirty-five years, therefore, St. Peter's School, having been the cornerstone of the present diocesan school system, has maintained a continuous existence in the worthy cause of religious public elementary education.



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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Charity School was a name commonly applied to all schools supported by the voluntary contributions of religious societies.

<sup>2</sup>James Grant Wilson, *Memorial History of the City of New York*, 4 volumes, New York, New York History Company, 1892-1893, III, 389.

<sup>3</sup>Farley, Most Rev. John M., *History of St. Patrick's Cathedral*, 31.

<sup>4</sup>Longworth's *Directory* for 1805; cited by Boese, *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>5</sup>*Records*, XX, 276.

<sup>6</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 70.

<sup>7</sup>*Minutes of the Common Council*, IV, 197.

<sup>8</sup>*Minutes of St. Peter's*, June 26, 1810; cf. January 4, 1811.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, August 10, 1810.

<sup>10</sup>*Minutes of St. Peter's*, May 2, 1820.

<sup>11</sup>Boese, *op. cit.*, 100.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>14</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 69 ff.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, 72 f.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>17</sup>Among the Protestant clergymen were Reverend Messrs. Chase, Wainwright, Matthews, Milnor, and Onderdonk. Cf., Boese, *op. cit.*, 105.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>19</sup>*Minutes of the Common Council*, April 28, 1825, XIV, 488.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Farley, *op. cit.*, 73.

<sup>22</sup>Boese, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>25</sup>Boese, *op. cit.*, 97.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>28</sup>Kehoe, Lawrence (ed.), *Complete Works of the Most Reverend John Hughes, DD., Archbishop of New York*, 2 vols. New York, Kehoe, 1866, 60.

<sup>28a</sup>*Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>28b</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 103 f.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 104.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 102-107.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 144.

<sup>32</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 529.

<sup>33</sup>Kehoe, I, 146 f.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 149.

<sup>35</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, III, 529 f.

<sup>36</sup>Kehoe, *op. cit.*, I, 243.

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<sup>37</sup>Wilson, *op. cit.*, III, 391.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>Boese, *op. cit.*, 113.

<sup>41</sup>*Records*, XXIII, 36 ff.

<sup>42</sup>Shea, *op. cit.*, IV, 108 f.

<sup>43</sup>William Turner, "Schools," *Catholic Encyclopedia*, XIII, 560.

<sup>44</sup>Bishop Quarter's *Diary*, cited by McLaughlin, *op. cit.*, 113.

<sup>45</sup>This is the present convent building adjoining the church.

<sup>46</sup>P. 113.

<sup>47</sup>The *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac*, 1843.

<sup>48</sup>M. A. McCann, *History Mother Seton's Daughters*, New York, 1917.

<sup>49</sup>*Sadlier's Catholic Almanac*, 1875, 85.

## CONCLUSION

Born in a period when religious liberty was affirmed as a Constitutional right, located in a city which was then the capital of a newly created Republic, rich in its association with the French and Spanish allies of the young nation, St. Peter's Church, nevertheless, suffered in its early days the trials of dissension from within, and, particularly during the later period of nativism, of suspicion from without. Yet its history is the unfolding of the marvelous progress of the Catholic Church in New York. Its parish limits—if such they may be called then—were originally the whole State of New York and the eastern part of New Jersey. Its priests extended their missionary labors throughout this wide field. From the far end of Long Island, the eastern shores of New Jersey and the northern limits of New York, many faithful Catholics brought their families to St. Peter's for the reception of the Sacraments. The area which then constituted the original parish limits now embraces the Archdiocese of New York with its suffragan Sees of Buffalo, Albany, Brooklyn, Newark, Rochester, Ogdensburg, Trenton and Syracuse.

Father Whelan's little flock in 1785 consisted of about twenty practical Catholics in a total of two hundred. No diocese as yet was created, no hierarchy as yet existed, and no church throughout that vast area as yet was built. From these humble beginnings the Catholic Church in this region has grown from the original congregation of St. Peter's to its present extensive state. Where there was once not even a regularly established parish there is today an Archdiocese which is Metropolitan with eight suffragan Sees. When one hundred and fifty years ago there was but one priest, there are now a Cardinal-Archbishop, ten Bishops and 5328 priests. The Church of St. Peter today is the mother to 456 churches in the Archdiocese of New York alone and of 2293 churches throughout the whole area including the suffragan Sees. When there were then but 200 Catholics in the original congregation of St. Peter's, there are today 1,200,000 in the Archdiocese alone and 4,435,559 in the whole territory of the Archdiocese and its suffragan Sees. Throughout this vast

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territory are scattered communities of Religious Orders, Seminaries, schools, hospitals, asylums and charitable agencies of varied activity.

The one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of Old St. Peter's Church, therefore, should be an event of outstanding historic interest to every Catholic living within the confines of its original jurisdiction, to every American Catholic who is appreciative of the history of the Church in the United States and to every non-Catholic American who sees in the story of St. Peter's the realization of the glorious principle of religious freedom.



# APPENDIX A

## PASTORS OF THE CHURCH

### MISSIONARY

The Very Reverend Ferdinand Farmer, S.J., V.G., 1783-1785

### RESIDENT PASTORS

The Reverend Charles Whelan, O.M.Cap., 1784-1786

The Reverend Andrew Nugent, O.M.Cap., 1786-1787

The Reverend William Vincent O'Brien, O.P., 1787-1807

The Reverend Michael Nicholas Burke, O.P.,  
(*pro tempore*) 1789-1792

The Reverend Louis Sibourd, 1807-1808

The Very Reverend Anthony Kohlmann, S.J., V.G., 1808-1815

The Reverend Benedict Fenwick, S.J., 1815-1817

The Reverend Peter Anthony Malou, S.J.,  
(*pro tempore*) 1817-1818

The Reverend Charles Dominic Ffrench, O.P., 1818-1822

The Very Reverend John Power, D.D., V.G., 1822-1849

The Reverend James M. Smith (*pro tempore*) 1829-1831

The Reverend Charles Constantine Pise, D.D., 1849

The Very Reverend William Quinn, V.G., 1849-1873

The Reverend Michael Joseph O'Farrell, 1873-1881

The Right Reverend James H. McGean, LL.D., 1881-1926

The Reverend James E. Noonan, LL.D., 1926-

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*Records and Studies* ..... *Historical Records and Studies.* United States Catholic Historical Society.  
*Researches* ..... *American Catholic Historical Researches.*

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Mr. McLaughlin, who was sometime Sacristan of St. Patrick's



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